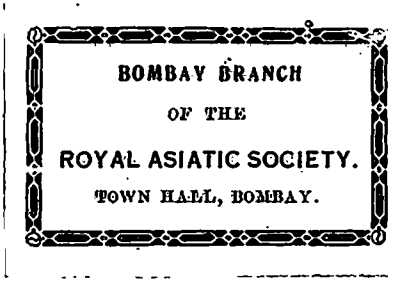
00044734



Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 02 January, 2016

BABYLON THE GREAT:

A DISSECTION AND DEMONSTRATION

OF MEN AND THINGS

IN

THE BRITISH CAPITAL.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"THE MODERN ATHENS."

OOA.f.2

Βαβυλὼν ἡ μεγάλη, ἡ μήτηρ τῶν πορνῶν καὶ βδελυγμάτων τῆς γῆς.

44734 v

VOLUME II.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR

CHARLES KNIGHT, PALL-MALL EAST.

M DCCC XXV.

44734

00044734

CONTENTS

OF

THE SECOND VOLUME.

CHAPTER I.

Page

THE LONDON PARTICULAR ELOQUENCE. — Common Council and doings there—*Eloquence not particular*, the Hustings—Time and Place—The Sub-way men, *et hoc genus omne* 1

CHAPTER II.

BABYLONIAN LITERATURE.—Machinery—Sundry Schools —the Founders and Fellows thereof—Sentiment and Song 34

CHAPTER III.

THE PRESS *a*—General Sketch 66

CHAPTER IV.

THE PRESS *b*.—Disquisition—The Times 82

CHAPTER V.

Page

THE PRESS γ.—The Herald—Police reporting—The Chronicle—The Post—The New Times—The British Press—The Advertiser—The Ledger—The Courier—The Globe and Traveller—The British Traveller—The Sun—The Star 112

CHAPTER VI.

THE SUNDAY PRESS.—The John Bull—The Examiner—The Observer—Pierce Egan—Dispatch—The other Life—The Englishman—The Sunday Times 135

CHAPTER VII.

THE HINDER-END OF THE PRESS.—Cobbett—Backslidings—Bones—The Outcasts 185

CHAPTER VIII.

THE JOURNALS α.—Lamentations—Mechanics' Magazine—The Literary Gazette—The Literary Chronicle . . 201

CHAPTER IX.

THE JOURNALS ε.—The Philosophy of the Moon—The London—The New Monthly—The Quarterly—The Westminster 226

CHAPTER X.

THE BABYLONIAN LAW.—Confusion—Absurdity—Civil—Criminal—Old Bailey Counsel 258

CHAPTER XI.

Page

BABYLONIAN EDUCATION.—Male—Female—For Youths —University 289

CHAPTER XII.

CONCLUSION OF THE SECOND VOLUME 3

Throughout the Volumes will be found a variety of Babylonian phenomena and phases, which it is to be hoped will need no index.

BABYLON THE GREAT.

CHAPTER I.

LONDON PARTICULAR ELOQUENCE, AND LONDON ELOQUENCE NOT VERY PARTICULAR.

——————— vertice ad auras
Ætherias, tantum radici in Tartare tendit.

VIRGIL.

ONE who is fonder of pleasing himself with the creations of his own wayward fancy, than of stating plain truths and plain words, would find delightful scope in laying hold of the opposite ends of things and circumstances in Babylon the Great, bringing them together, and pointing out the singular contrasts which they form to each other. Babylonian wealth is doubtless the greatest

of all wealth; but Babylonian misery, which haply dwells at the next door, is the very extreme of human privation. Babylonian science is just as eagle-eyed as though there were not a single particle of charcoal in all her dingy atmosphere; but Babylonian stupidity is just as obtuse as though the fogs of Bœotia formed her eternal mantle. Babylonian song is—or rather *was*, for it is long since all that was perishable of "one John Milton, a schoolmaster," died—is the most lofty and sublime that ever was heard in any land; but Babylonian poetry—*vide* the whole drove of her rhyming sons and daughters—is the sorriest stuff that ever unretentive brains, or skulls leaky because cracked, inflicted upon the world. Babylonian honesty approaches remarkably near to perfection, and though it be a piece of mechanism, it is a piece of mechanism which is very beautiful and very lasting; but no where, perchance, in the world, is there to be found so organised a system of fraud and deceit, or a system played in so many parts or by so many performers.

The beautiful similitude of the image, under which the empire of the ancient Babylon was presented to the dreaming monarch of that great city, applies as well to Babylon the Great, as if it had been whispered into the ear of the Lord Mayor instead of that of Nebuchadnezzar—"Thou, O

King, sawest and beheld a great image. This great image, whose brightness was excellent, stood before thee, and the form thereof was terrible. This image's head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass, his legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay."

Now, in all the four elements of which the manageable and describable part of the Great Babylon is composed—in that which is, that which is spoken, that which is written, and that which is done, within her ample circumference, throughout her countless divisions, and among her innumerable people, it is always easy to trace the component parts of the Chaldean image: there is always the head of gold—showy and valuable, but withal exceedingly heavy; there are the breast and the arms of silver—the desire of Mammon, and the means of grasping at and attaining him; there are the belly and thighs of brass, not merely in obtrusive colour and ceaseless sound, but literally, and without any figure at all, it demands that a part of the human body kept so incessantly at work as the Babylonian bowels, should have the strength and insensibility of brass; there are the legs of iron; and when one comes to the very lowest extremity, the miry clay begins to predominate over that—so that, if the meanest of all the

Babylonian elements be taken, one may almost regard it as in the act of passing into those bricks of which the external Babylon is composed.

In some chapters of the former Volume, I have attempted to remove so much of the obscurity from the gold and the silver of speeches and speaking men, as to enable my readers to form a sort of judgment as to what they are like. I have done this hastily, and in a manner somewhat different from that in which such things are usually attempted to be done; but I have done it without prejudice on my part, in the hope that it will be so taken and received on the part of others. This having been done, I have only now to perform the briefer task of examining the brass, the iron, and the clay, in order to complete my likeness of the great image of Babylonian eloquence.

Those three component parts of the image are to be found chiefly in the Hall of the Common Council, and at the public meetings of the people for political purposes. Not that these are the only flood-gates by which the Great Babylon lets out her din; for there are many others which partake largely of the brass, the iron, and the clay, and not a few in which lead is substituted for the second of those substances. There are political and charitable dinner-parties, at which a great deal is said, and said in a style which is truly Babylonian; and

there are little knots of ladies and gentlemen, calling themselves and each other literary—professing to touch the candle of art at the flame, and "hold the eel of science by the tail," who dribble out their physical tea and their metaphysical nothings at the return of the week or of the month. As these, however, are mere efflorescences upon the Babylonian surface—as they go deep into nothing—as they have no effect whatever upon the opinions either of the Babylonians or of the world generally, they may be left in their own harmless tranquillity: for, however wretched may be the dinner oratory, the dinner itself and the purpose for which it is intended are often both very good; and while the fluttering insects, the ambition of whose lives it is to spin their filmy gossamer of slender verse or more slender prose, are engaged in comparing their cobwebs, they are very happy among themselves, and, for the time, very gently withdrawn from that world to which, according to their own estimate, they are so ornamental—and so useless according to the estimate of others.

When I say that the brass, the iron, and the clay, with here and there a little, or rather not a little, of lead, are the materials out of which the *fag* end of Babylonian eloquence is in general manufactured, I must not be understood as attempting to undervalue either those component parts, or

the compound which they form. Of all metallic substances, brass has ever made the greatest noise in the world, and whether it be elevated on spire, or gallows, or hustings, it always both draws and lengthens the ears of the multitude; furthermore, it is the only metal which becomes the more valuable the greater the quantity of rust and dirt with which it is encrusted. Iron, again, is the most cutting, and the most susceptible both of edge and of polish, although naturally it be the most rough and ungainly. As for lead, it is well remarked by Dr. Arbuthnot, that "though it be the most dull and sluggish of all metals, yet it is the quickest in falling into fusion;" and upon this account it is the best emblem of that tide of feeling and opinion in public meetings, which makes them alternately praise and pelt the brass which is sounding, or the iron which is slashing, in order to win their applause; and as to the clay, it is the most passive and plastic of all substances—may be moulded into vessels of any form or for any use,—and therefore there cannot possibly be a fitter emblem of those passions of the crowd upon which the brazen thighs and iron limbs of speech-making attempt to trample the prints of themselves. From these explanations, I trust I shall be exonerated of all attempt at the depreciation of that which is supposed to constitute the bold, manly, and universal

opinion of the crowded thousands of the British metropolis — which passes current through the provinces as the real coin of that opinion, but which is, in reality, neither more nor less than the assertion of one or two very forward, but in general very shallow and not over-principled persons, who, as there appears to be no means of getting any thing like one fixed opinion from half-a-million of men,(and when double that number of women and children are added, the hope is by no means rendered greener,) generously, or at least gratuitously, palm an opinion upon them.

When one hears of the greatness of the City of London, and when one sees its wealth and its state, one very naturally supposes that its sentiments,—as delivered by the chosen men who do not wear but are its livery, embodied in the form of petitions upon skins of calves, carried up in gilded coaches by shrives who are yearning for Knighthood,—would have more of the essence of wisdom and the efficiency of power in them than any other sentiments whatever. It would naturally be supposed that the voice of the greatest Corporation of this greatest of cities, brought forward as it is by a weight and a pomp peculiar to itself, would be something to which Senates would listen, and by which Kings would be guided; and if the said Corporation could contrive to hold its meetings in Cornwall

or Caithness, so that its orators might have no critical eyes upon them, and then parade its gaudy equipages the breadth or the length of the Island, there is not a doubt but the efficiency of its sayings would be augmented. A visit to Guildhall upon a high political day, when the trumpets are to be sounded and the blunderbusses fired off there, enables a person to form a wonderfully correct estimate of the metaphysical influence of that which physically seems so great; and from the lesson which one there learns, one is left in doubt as to whether any specific effect would be produced either upon the practices of Government or the progress of society, although the Guildhall of London, and those who do their elocution therein, were snugly and securely entombed in the abutments and piers of London Bridge. It is not, indeed, of the nature of Corporations generally, nor is there any thing in the structure of the Corporation of London to make it an exception, that they should either be of much use or held in much estimation at the present day: they belong to times of darkness; and in as far as they confer greater facilities, either of speaking or of dining, than are possessed by men generally, they fatten the body corporate till it be too gross and unwieldy for active exertion, and they at the same time starve the nation. In as far as the said Corporation acts as a police

magistracy it may be useful, though not nearly so useful as another description of establishment that could be supported for a very small portion of the expense; but as it exists, and acts in levying taxes for Corporation purposes and expending them with Corporation judgment and taste, why, really, if its members were not all so very wealthy and so very worshipful in their own persons, the machine itself would be little better than a nuisance. It may be said, and I am sure I have no objection to the saying of it, that the facilities given to the great Corporation and the small Companies of the Babylon, for procuring the most expensive, and at the same time the ugliest barges, and coaches, and statues—their power and their will of feasting themselves and their wives and daughters in the great Hall of Gog—and their freedom to hold forth in the Council Chamber, and to prevent those who have not undergone a certain bondage, or have not money to purchase the power of earning their bread by the labour of their own hands, are chartered and vested rights — rights which are immutable and imprescriptable. To those who enjoy them, they no doubt are so, and so are all exclusive privileges and possessions; but there are cases in which other men call them by another name.

But the morale of the Babylonian Senate is a

matter which scarcely any one, even of its own members, seems to understand; and, as it does not lie exactly in my way, the safest plan is to treat it after the fashion in which all very great philosophers treat all very abstruse subjects—that is, to let it alone. Enough remains for me to describe the external form of this curious Council, as it is exhibited within its hall, and so I need not plague myself about the internal philosophy.

The orators of the Common Council have the happiness of being set free from many of those restraints which operate in St. Stephen's, and yet more in the House of Lords. They speak, not because they know knowledge or have studied oratory, but through the immediate inspiration of themselves; and it is quite delightful to notice from how many inconveniences this glorious liberty sets them free. They have nothing to do with the common allotments of space or the usual succession of time; and therefore they can produce combinations which, if they do not convince by their truth, astonish by their novelty. A Common Councilman, if he find it necessary to flourish away respecting Leonidas, is at perfect liberty to send the former javelin-men of the city to aid the brave but unfortunate Spartan; and, if it will sound better, one of those orators may burn Troy or bury Herculaneum, long before either the one

or the other was founded He may do all this, and as much more like this as he pleases, in history; and, excepting always the art of cookery, he may treat every other art and science precisely in that way which is most convenient for himself, because, in whichever way he treats it, it has the same chance of being understood by a very considerable number of those who hear him.

There is another thing which gives to the "London particular" eloquence—the eloquence which is of and from and about the Babylon, and the Babylon only—a freedom which that of no other speaking congregation can well possess,—the three states meet together; and though the annual king and the life-rent peers of the City occupy the counter, while the common plebs are upon the floor, yet the youngest liveryman may oppose front to front the most portly alderman, or browbeat even the Lord of the fur cap himself. Another advantage attending the London particular eloquence is, that one may hear it without any other expense than that of time—which, after all, may be considered price enough, except by future Woods and Waithmans, who abstain for a little from their rhubarb and their ribands, in order to drink instruction from the civic Solomons.

Imagine yourself in a square apartment of very moderate dimensions, with a shop-board at one

end, upon the middle of which sits the metropolitan King, of giant dimensions, and having at his side his conscience-keeper, that tip-top of all wisdom, the Recorder, to whom belongs the glorious privilege of seeing that justice is done to fetters, to exile, and to the gallows, within the Great Babylon and the liberties thereof. You look at the odd physiognomy of this dignitary, and you are perfectly at a loss to ascertain by what strange whirl of the Epicurean atoms—I beg their pardon, for though they are Epicurean, they are anything but atoms—such an article should have been brought to such an use. The most probable theory is a desire to take advantage of the contrast which the legal adviser makes with the substantial breadth of that personage whom it is his province legally to advise,—just as a giant used to borrow altitude from the manikin that dangled at his side, as a Spanish beauty shines in consequence of the ugliness of her Duenna, as Gog and Magog look formidable among the wool-pack chiselings of Bubb, or, better and more appropriate still, as Alderman Wood seems a very wise man, and Alderman Waithman a very elegant and eloquent one, when they stand overtopping the Common Councils like a brace of Sauls—albeit no wise intent upon seeking their fathers' asses. "Wisdom," saith the wise man, "is justified in her children;" and it were a hard

matter indeed, if the more soft and safe personage were not to be equally justified in her adopted, especially when the act of adoption can be clearly established as belonging to her.

Upon the right hand of the Civic Speaker sit those substantial Aldermen, whose very look tells you that they are satisfied with things as they are, and upon his left the solemn W and the sonorous W, [the Babylonians hold the W'at so great value, in consequence, no doubt, of the Walworths, the Whittingtons, the Woods, and the Waithmans, that the half of it passes current in the City, for as much as the whole does any where else,] the one looking wisdom of unfathomable depth, and the other acuteness of incomprehensible point. The men of the City crowd the middle space, and the idle and industrious apprentices squeeze themselves into the pews below the bar,—the former, doubtless, to be warned from wickedness by the scare-crow, and the latter to be roused to emulation by the most worthy and most worshipful successor of Whittington.

You are now in a very wonderful place, and if you have ears you must prepare to lend them; for the tongues of Babel are about to be let loose,—Bow-bell is to ring, not in the steeple at Cheapside, but upon the apex of the wise men of the East. It comes not with calm preparation, as you observe

it in the Lords, nor in grim anxiety, as it was watched for in the Commons: it appears to creep along the ground like the odour of the *Grotto del Cane*, for it seizes upon the pillars which support the supporters of the City's independence, and the floor of the Hall rocks and rattles to the nether eloquence of the Livery; and the Chaldeans upon the one hand, and the Soothsayers on the other, are enveloped in a cloud of most appropriate though somewhat portentous dust. This is as it should be: your animals of smaller lineaments and less effective bite are continually on the alert, but your lion roars not—rouses not himself, unless you stir him up; and from this rousing call, by which life and metal are not put into the civic assembly, but made to come out of it, is one of the happiest devices that I ever witnessed in operation, and, like the fair dealings and feasts of the City, deserves to be brought into general use. While the gouty ankle of some ancient representative of Portsoken is treading out the last flourish of the reveille, and the attendants drawing up the ventilator to give passage to the dust, the broad, bright, and bland head of Mr. Favell rises above the clouds, with much of the majesty, but none of the coldness, of a political Chimberaço—or rather like the moon over the substantial vapour of the Thames, in those stilly and substantial nights when London is

shrouded in the mantle of her own smoke. The figure is so perfect that words cannot add to it, and so the speech, which is neither short nor straight, leaves upon your mind an impression that Mr. Favell is as good a man and as good an orator as any of the London particular—that he could transport the former quality to any place whatever; but that the latter is so heavy, and of such home use, that it could not be removed without the bills of mortality. Mr. James replies to the worthy orator. Of him you know nothing, saving that he is "James the less;" and so the less you hear or speak of his rhetorical powers the better.

The bland Favell and the gentle James form but the beginning of the display; and in the Galloways, the Welshes, and the Crockers, the fabric of the King's English is in constant danger of breaking down, while the call to "order" is answered only by greater confusion both of tongue and of feet, which crowds, and thickens, and hurries, till both sides of the Hall and both ends of the members mingle into one mighty din,—a din which no powers can stop, and no ear of common dimensions can receive; and so you grasp your head between your hands, and wait till the settling dust lets you know that it has exhausted itself.

This confusion, by which the question originally propounded to the meeting is entirely lost and you

are utterly confounded, appears to have no effect upon certain Members of the Corporation. The Lord Mayor looks as dignified and the Recorder as wise as ever; and Mr. Alderman Waithman and Mr. Samuel Dixon make a contemporaneous effort to rise, but the Common Councilman of his own accord gives place to the *quondam* Mayor, who advances toward the brass railing in a very formidable manner, and looks down upon the Commoners toward the left with a look which seems to say, "I have made this assembly a school of eloquence with which there is nothing comparable." Waithman is a shrewd man; and, though somewhat egotistical even in that capacity, he is a very effective police magistrate; but what should have induced him to take upon himself the burden of general politics, and the profession of an orator, it will take you a long while, or it will take you no time at all, to discover. He may be well skilled in the routine of his Wardmote, and his may be the logic and the elocution which are efficient there—nay, in the Common Council he is second to none of them in what seem to be their most appropriate gifts and exercises; but among orators of any other school, and statesmen of any school at all, the Alderman would not be able to work his way. No doubt, he looks a man of the most terrible powers: there is an argument at every angle of his most angular

visage, a curious solecism in the twist of his mouth; and, when he darts his eye towards Dixon, his regular opponent, the head of the latter would be fairly transfixed, were it not that the angry fire glides off from his smooth face, or is reflected back from the discs of his spectacles. Waithman's speech is full of assertion and full of figures, and he hurls them this way and that way with a vast deal of action and animation; but every javelin that he throws has a string to it, by which it is drawn back, and the whole are made in the end to conduce to the self-importance, and minister to the self-complacency, of him by whom they are hurled. He is by no means the most portly personage in the assembly, and few will think that he is the most comely to look upon; but I have seldom seen a man who made himself more constantly the idol of his own adoration. So true a worshipper has he been in this way, that his better sense has been a martyr to his faith, and Alderman Waithman, by sitting under his own shadow, has prevented himself from seeing and being warned by many things, which, however they might have affected his opinion of himself, would not have lessened his wisdom in that of the world. Standing there like the iron, and grasping the brass, he affects to reverse the image, and look down upon the gold and silver as if they were the miry clay. One would

excuse him for dealing somewhat of a hard measure to Mr. Dixon, because the spectacles of that gentleman are shield enough against the eloquence of the iron orator; but though he were fifty Lord Mayors, a hundred head of Aldermen, and ten thousand of the most eloquent in the Common Council, one cannot, unless upon the oblique theory of that being an acknowledgment of their merits and a compliment to them, or upon the direct theory of the lean wolf's privilege to bay the luminaries, allow him to school the foremost statesmen of the time. They may be wrong—sometimes they are wrong—but Mr. Alderman Waithman is not exactly the person to set them right. Still, however, he may have his use,—just as the barking of a little dog, though it could not of itself save the property, may arouse the watchmen.

Mr. Waithman carries the oratory upon his side as far as it will go,—so far indeed, that nobody upon the other cares for replying to it, unless it be him, who during the violence of it was ensconced behind the spectacles—the aforenamed Mr. Samuel Dixon, who may be considered as the smooth whetstone by which edge is given to the scissars, the knife, or whatever else one may choose to call the grand cutting-tool of London particular eloquence. Mr. Dixon rises without any of the arrogance of a regular orator, and he displays none of the qualities which frighten you

in the Alderman. His speech puts you very much in mind of a house-wife's reticule, containing gold, and gloves, and memorandums, and handkerchiefs, and an endless variety of things,—all of which appear to have been put into it with such house-wife hurry, that you can never discover what shall come next; and the gold, which, just as is the case with a reticule, is neither the most abundant nor the most bulky article, comes rattling out when it is certainly not expected, and probably not intended. No words, however, can do justice to this London particular. The knowledge which is known in the Common Council, is so peculiar and so intuitive—the wit is so different from that which bears the same name among mankind generally—the logic is strung together after so curious a fashion, and conclusions so sprout out of premises, which appear not only to belong to other genera of things, but to be utterly addle and barren,—that the eloquence which is so effective there, cannot be poured into, or carried away by, the common clay pitcher of the human understanding; and therefore he who would either understand it, or demonstrate that it cannot be understood—for between these the balance of justice wavers—must repair to Guildhall himself.

One who has examined for himself "the London particularoratory," and who has thence been

enabled to judge in how far the counsellings of that Corporation, or rather of the two or three by whom that Corporation are "drawn up and drilled," are useful to the world, will next, in order to complete his analysis of the spoken part of that which is supposed to constitute the Babylonian public mind, wish to examine that eloquence which is not so very particular,—those substances which float upon the surface of the crowd when its waves are up and its mass in motion; and for this purpose a meeting in Covent Garden Market will serve just as well as a meeting any where else.

Those meetings constitute the feet and toes of the Babylonian eloquence, and, like them of the image, they are truly of iron mixed with miry clay,—those who plan and who hold forth having all the stubborn qualities of the one, and those who are led and who listen having the yielding and plastic nature of the other. I say, those who plan and those who hold forth; because, in the management of so very fluctuating a thing as a miscellaneous mass of people, brought together without union either of principle or of purpose, and who come to do that which they cannot understand, who from curiosity come to do nothing, or who from another principle come to do that which they understand but will not confess, it would not do, if the secret arrangements and the open speech-making were

vested in the same person. In all places, such as Westminster, where that which is called the voice of the majority of the householders is supposed to be worth any thing, there always is a set of persons by whom that voice is appropriated, and who manage it for the avowed glory of certain automata that they set up—and haply for their own real aggrandisement and emolument. The persons who have the cupidity, or the vanity, or the ambition, or the cunning, or the meanness, or the virtue, or the vice, or whatever else it may be, to make this appropriation, and procure and manage the tools necessary for its preservation, must have a character for wisdom which no man of their dimensions could keep, if he were to make speeches before the crowd, and subject himself to accidents from the reason or the raillery of opponents. The curious way in which those who, among men of information and orderly conduct, are always effective, are foiled by the fluctuating turns of chance at public meetings, shows that the chain by which the populace can be held together, and drawn in any particular direction for any great length of time, must be both a strong and a secret one; and if it were worth while to trace the curious machinery by which the free suffrages of even the Westminster electors are enslaved,—how they begin at two or three masters of oracular monosyllables—spread

themselves through clubs and alehouses,—one should so expose the independent voice of the people, that the people themselves would be ashamed of it. The qualities required for this purpose are not those which, when they are avowed to the world, are accounted either talents or principles. A man of a great mind could not, and a man of a clean mind would not, creep through the crooked passages and dirty crannies by which alone such influence is to be attained. When I say a clean mind, I, of course, mean not one which is clean from the stains of personal and practical tarnish in private life, but one which is clean from error and jugglery in the apprehension of general principles and political views.

That the persons who are "governors of the sub-ways," in such matters as that of which I am speaking, are possessed of a certain species of intelligence and tact, I do not mean to deny: the mole and the badger have an expertness in boring and digging under ground, which no man would ever think of attributing to the eagle or the lion; and there is no doubt but that they who organise at least the electioneering meetings in the Babylon (say, for example, Mr. Francis Place of Charing Cross, if report says sooth in naming him of the number,) would baffle, at this sort of operation, not only all the Hobhouses and Burdetts, but all the

Eldons, and Cannings, and Broughams, and Huskissons, in both Houses of Parliament. If, however, even the said Mr. Place, notwithstanding all his reported science in this way, were to come upon the hustings, he would be no match whatever for Mr. Henry Hunt; and if, by any unforeseen combination of things, he were to get into the House of Commons, I would not be disposed to take an even bet upon him against Mr. Alderman Brydges or Sir Francis Ommaney; while it would be odds worth any man's taking, that Mr. Peter Moore or Mr. Richard Martin, or even Mr. Alderman Wood, would finish him at the first round. It is said that this wise-looking, and, as some folks say, really wise politician, once withdrew a little too much of the veil, by giving evidence before a Committee; and that the undemonstrated shape in which some propositions were drawn from him there, has led to a suspicion that he is not exactly the political conjuror which had long been supposed; and really, if certain writings which have been shown me as his, are *bonâ fide* of his own concoction, even I cannot help wondering at the small quantity of wisdom which suffices, if not to "govern all the world," at least to gull a very large portion of it. Into the political character of those persons it is not, however, worth while to go much farther; and I shall not depict the philosophy of this one in the

mean time, as I may have occasion to do it afterwards, if time and olfactory apparatus will bear me out, in the analysis of a certain school, which, though it have disciples in all countries, has its chief seat, and perhaps had its first (British) origin, in the Babylon.

Leaving the machinery by which the meetings for the eloquence which is not particular are organized, I may sum up in a single page the aspect and the utility of that eloquence itself. For this purpose, imagine that leave has been asked and granted of the High Bailiff of Westminster—that hustings have been erected in front of St. Paul's, Covent Garden—that the cabbages have been removed, except a sweet garnish of leaves in front of the stage of display—that the waggons have been drawn up in treble line, each crammed with shilling and eighteen-penny spectators—that the tops of the adjoining booths have received their complement—and that all the interstices are wedged with those whose object it is to see and to hear, and also with not a few who hope to exercise their fingers in the more profitable exercise of touching,—imagine this; and furthermore imagine that it is Parliament-time, and that the portable Henry Grey Bennet, and those fail-me-nevers, Messrs. George Byng and Peter Moore, have come in the hope of disburthening themselves of that eloquence whereof

they are unable to give to the wind within the walls of St. Stephen's. Burdett and Hobhouse, ushered in by the chief men of the committee, take their station in front of the hustings; and all goes bravely on until the opening speech has been spoken by some privileged person, and the resolutions are read, and about to be carried by general acclamation. Here a disturbing force drives its way; and as much agitation and heat is produced among the multitude, as by a bullock in a china-shop, a fire-brand among the dry stubble, or any other restless and resistless thing in a situation where it is not expected. Henry Hunt, the Katerfelto of the crowd, the Emperor of all rabble conjurors in matters political, shows his broad face and waves his broad hat amid the astonished regulars, and over the aroused populace. The confusion is tremendous,—the cries "Off! off!" "Hunt for ever!" "Shame! shame!" and "Bravo Hunt!" frighten the rats to the lowest cellar in the hundreds of Drury. No matter which cry may be predominant: against those tides of popular opposition Henry Hunt is a rock of adamant. He stands in the imperturbable confidence of his own face, and the experience that, by one or two drops of that oil which ever stills the swell of such a meeting's indignation, he will have it all his own way. He drops it on with wonderful adroitness; so

that in one minute, they who were clamouring against him toss up their caps in his behalf. Even you must allow that there is in this man that talent which can command, not the understanding or the conviction, but the momentary passions and the momentary impulse, of a crowd. Of the principles of politics you can see that he knows nothing, and he does not look as if he cared much for the results; but he seems to have sounded the waters of such places, and to know their depth and their current. His language is broad, and even vulgar, and it is delivered without order or concatenation; but Hunt uses his eyes, and moves with the movements of those to whom he is addressing himself, with astonishing nicety and truth. There is a certain degree of boldness in assertion—an apparent daring of being contradicted—which gives to vague assertion much of the effect of well established truth, and stands a speaker, whose audience is any thing but select, in better stead than the most comprehensive knowledge and the most tasteful and felicitous expression. He only is a happy orator, who is happy to time and circumstances; and under many disadvantages, both in report and reality, Henry Hunt shows that he possesses this happiness. Even upon public and political grounds —the only grounds which you think of when a man stands upon the hustings and addresses a public

meeting, you cannot bring yourself to love or even to respect this Mr. Hunt; but still, such is the impressible nature of the clay upon which he is playing the potter, that he is able to confound all the deep doings of the organizers, and turns the business of the day into an absolute farce.

In the doing of this, he is indeed merely momentary; for when the orators, for whose benefit apparently the meeting has been collected, come to return thanks for the thanks that are given them, they take vengeance upon Hunt; the unstable tide returns to that channel which has been delved out for it by the laborious spademen of the committee, and he, who so shortly before succeeded with applause, is hissed, and it may be pelted, off the hustings and away from the meeting.

Orators of this description, who thrust themselves forward as the champions of that liberty which they do not understand, and of that people whom they cannot serve, not only subject themselves to many vicissitudes, but do more harm to the cause of rational freedom, and indeed of every thing worthy of being called freedom, than its direct and avowed enemies. Even though they were as well informed and sincere, as their conduct in general proves them to be ignorant and oblique, the way in which they go to work would prevent their doing even the smallest good; and it is utterly

impossible to conceive a state of society which could be benefited by the harangues of mob-orators. If, indeed, times were desperate—if the fabric of society were so far broken down, as that momentary impulses of crowds were the governing principle, then mob-orators, if not very useful, would become very influential personages; but when society is still so entire, as that sufficient power is in the hands of the acknowledged and constitutional Government, then the mob-orator, by directly stirring up the people against that, and thereby tempting or forcing it to a reaction against the people, invariably makes matters worse. The time of the populace is wasted, their minds are inflamed, their attention is withdrawn from their proper pursuits, the heedless and the mischievous among them are apt to say foolish things and do wicked ones, and the consequence invariably has been, a loss of liberty very nearly proportional to the clamour that was made for an accession of it—or, rather, in exact proportion to the quantity of time and industry and good sense lost by the people.

If a change for the better, either in the dynasty or general constitution of a country, or of the practical details, is to be made, it must be made among the people—in their general information and habits, and not by tumultuous assemblies, and exhibitions of declamation and invective. When the system

is such, as that it allows the people to acquire knowledge and act in private life upon the acquisition, the real government will always be vested in the people; and if men generally be taught to know what freedom is, and to respect it as such, there is no power on earth that can enslave them. Whoever, therefore, has an honest desire to keep the practice of the English Government, or of any other Government, up to the intelligence of the age, will be careful not to encourage any of those meetings, which show how irresolute and unstable a thing an unreflecting populace is; and whoever wishes to see the darknesses of a Government cleared up, the decays repaired, and a vigorous and improving condition brought about, will aim, not at stirring up the passions of mankind—no, nor at propagating any favourite theory of his own, but at the general diffusion of education—the putting of men in such a state of mental activity and vigilance, as that they shall not be misled by politicians of any sort. If the people are to have active political strength, it must be the strength of mind, so informed and so expanded, as that no designing man shall be able to turn it against themselves. "Knowledge is power," and therefore if it is wished that there should be power in the people, give them knowledge, or rather let them be so placed as to acquire it for themselves; for, after all, knowledge conned by

rote, whether it be political or of any other kind, does not deserve the name. The human intellect resembles the diamond: you may polish it; but if you attempt to paint it, you dim its lustre and destroy or conceal its value.

But if promiscuous meetings for the purpose of listening to the language of those that are more noisy than wise be, under any circumstances, of a very doubtful character, there is surely no redeeming trait in those of Babylon the Great; for, collected as her crowds are from all parts of the country and of the world, lost to the salutary ties of relationship and connexion and the necessity of keeping up a character, as many of them necessarily are, and disposed to mischief as are a good many others, their assembling together cannot conduce to edification, and therefore it can have no beneficial result. Indeed, its influence must tend the other way; because the opinion which is held up to the world as being their opinion, is but too often the mere dictum of the most impudent, and therefore the most worthless person, who thrusts himself forward upon the hustings; and did they, who attend such places more for amusement than for any thing else, take time to reflect that they are giving importance by making themselves mentally slaves, to a man of whose acquaintance they would be

ashamed in private life, it is probable that they would take a course somewhat different.

In times of peace and prosperity, when every man finds employment and maintenance, and when the majority entertain the cheering hope that their own condition shall be bettered, and form plans to carry into execution that most patriotic and reformatory of all wishes—that their children shall be wiser and better men than themselves, your public meetings become few, and your mob-orators fall into ridicule or sink into neglect. A healthy state of the body politic throws them off; and it is only when public prosperity is languid and diseased, that they make their appearance. The vicissitudes of Henry Hunt, and of others who, like Henry Hunt, attempted, or pretended to attempt, the repairing of that of the nature of which they were wholly ignorant, is no bad illustration of the truth of these remarks—remarks which I have been induced to make, not because I either need or desire to crouch to persons girt with authority—not because I prefer any thing, even leaning toward unnecessary restraint, to that freedom of opinion and of action without which a nation, govern them as you will, would be a mean and grovelling herd; but because I love liberty, and regret to see her fair form stained by bungling and dirty hands, and her sacred name

profaned by lips which are not pure. No man enjoying that inheritance, which the very fact of being born a Briton—of having moral and intellectual room in which his faculties, of whatsoever kind they may be, may develope themselves, and in which his talents, whatever may be their nature, may have free scope for exercise—confers,—can, unless corruption has mildewed him to the very core, sit down in calmness and retirement, and write that he wishes to see that freedom, that room for action, that privilege of thought, which, whatever he is, have made him what he is—ay, and which in most, if not in all cases, might have made him somewhat better—diminished by the smallest tittle. No; so far from it, he must not only wish, but do all that in him lies, to purify its nature and enlarge its magnitude. But, in setting about this honestly and aright, he will inquire of himself what is the original cause of one man being either physically or mentally the slave of another; and, as he cannot fail to discover that, in England at least, the progress of civilization has put an end to the slavery of mere brute or brutal force, he will learn that the only remaining shackle is that which enchains the mind in ignorance, and against this his efforts will be directed,—so that himself and his countrymen may acquire more of the forms of freedom, by possessing in their own minds more of the reality.

Far be it from me to desire that the voice of the people should be stifled!—It is a glorious voice; it is a voice which not only keeps things right at home, but speaks in the soft words of peace to the friends of freedom, and in the loudest thunder to her enemies, from one end of the earth to another; and statesmen at home, and kings and lords far distant, learn to be vigilant, because the people of England have an eye which never sleeps, a tongue which not the earth itself could bribe to silence, and an arm which no combination, that made darkness its covering or despotism its shield, could resist. But such meetings as those that are planned and conducted by the persons, and in the manner, that I have mentioned—of which any one who chooses to waste time upon it may judge for himself, are not the people of England; and the voice which rends the idle air, while the brazen puppet demolishes alike the structure of reason and of language, is not the voice of the people of England. That voice is too magnificent in its dimensions, and too refined in its essence, for being uttered even by the most learned, the most patriotic, and the most eloquent of her ornaments; and therefore it would be madness to exact it from those who are in themselves mere hurts and stains.

CHAPTER II.

BABYLONIAN LITERATURE.

I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written.

THE BIBLE.

IF he by whom those words were written, expressed his apprehension of the inability of the whole world to contain the books which the slow processes of original thought and manual penmanship could have produced upon the single subject to which he alludes, how much more would he have wondered to find the world not only containing but purchasing, and probably reading, the thousands and ten thousands—ay millions, of sheets, and pamphlets, and volumes, which the Babylonian apparatus sends forth year after year! In all that it displays, and in all that it produces, London is a wonderful place; but in no display, and in no production, is it more wonderful than in that of printed paper,—every branch of the art of producing

which has been so improved, or at least so changed, that literature, which used to be one of the most slow and laborious operations, has become one of the most light and rapid. In as far as the impressing of the words upon paper is concerned, the operation seems one of magic. A small steam-engine clicks and hisses in the corner of a printer's cellar; the roof is full of trundling wheels and revolving chains; a few machines are scattered over the floor, which a boy feeds at the one end with sheets of white paper; and it is but a revolution of the wheels,—an operation very brief and apparently very simple, and the same sheets of paper are discharged at the other end, printed on both sides, and ready to be folded and stitched into books.—Thus Swift's idea of a machine for the manufacture of literature has been realised to a certain extent; and many will suspect, when they see the nature of the things produced, and would be fully convinced, if they saw the manner in which they are prepared, that the engine-work begins somewhat earlier than the stamping of the types upon the paper; for there is many a large showy and pretending volume that comes forth with all the airs of originality, which, when you come to examine it, proves to be in substance so very like one of the old ones, that you cannot imagine that any sort of apparatus more intellectual than a printing-

machine, or any genius superior to a peck of coals and a pitcher of water, has been expended in the composition of that which is so very fair and fascinating to look upon.

I am far from saying that this is wrong; for it proves, that great as the facilities in the production of books have become, they have not kept pace with the desire of information on the part of the people: and though at first sight one might imagine that there is a little dishonesty in appropriating the labours of other men, more especially of men who are dead and so cannot protect either their names or their property, yet it is some consolation to know that the matter so appropriated is much more valuable—much more useful to society, than any thing which the appropriator could invent or make. It is of small consequence that that legacy, which an author of choice imagination or profound research may have left to the world, is served up under a dozen different forms, and for a dozen different booksellers. The food of the mind has this superiority over the food of the body,—that it cannot be wasted, neither can it, if of a wholesome nature at first, be rendered either unpalatable or unsafe by any degree of bungling in those by whom it is cooked; and, just as Sir Roger de Coverly's parson was the most eloquent preacher in the neighbourhood because he never delivered a sermon of

his own composition, so, perchance, are they to be held as the most useful of the Babylonian book-manufacturers, who never compose a line of that which they procure to be printed, but who, through fear of staining alike their fingers and their paper if they should write, perform every operation, save that which belongs to the printer, in the same way that a gardener trims a hedge or a tailor shapes an article of apparel. I am aware that fastidious persons object to this substitution of scissors for sense in the craft of book-making: they would have nothing published but that which is original, and reckon this transmutation of books nowise better than the practising of a fraud upon the public. But those captious persons will please to observe, if, indeed, they will please to observe any thing, that all the practical advantages are upon the side of this modern method—if modern method indeed it be; and those advantages may be easily shown.

In the first place, it is perfectly axiomatic, that the less of original genius and talent that are occupied in the production of books, there will be the more left to help forward every thing else connected with the progress of society, in the arts and the business of life. Secondly, it can be no disadvantage to those by whom books are sold, or for whose pecuniary profit they are understood to be printed; because a dull plodding personage is not

only a much more manageable but a more laborious article, than a man of superior intellect,—so that a very comfortable dunce may, in his way, fabricate more volumes in a year than a man of genius could invent and compose in a century. Besides, as it is not the makers, but the buyers and readers of books, from whom the vender derives his profits, and as the quantity of books bought and read must always increase in proportion as intellect and genius increase among the purchasing and reading public, it is clearly for the interest of the bookseller, that as much talent as possible should be withdrawn from the class of persons who produce and prepare books, and transferred to those who read them. Thirdly, if the quantity of new publications were to be limited to the number of new ideas, inventions, and discoveries, they would be few indeed; and I know not how great a proportion of those who contrive, under the present system, to get their half-dozen of names, which suit their half-dozen of departments in the vocation of letters, plastered upon the advertising posts, would have to return to those shuttles, and anvils, and hammers, to which they had been found incompetent before they attempted this more manageable trade.

There was a time when original thinking and original writing sufficed, and more than sufficed, for all the purposes of publication; for, in those days,

every work that appeared was full of novelty and fresh with spirit; and besides these, many works were laid on the shelf in manuscript, which are now received and read with pleasure and admiration. In those days, however, the profession itself was a novelty; the surface of darkness had just begun to be broken, and the whole world had the richness of a newly discovered and virgin soil. Every step that a man took, in which way soever he took it, was a step toward information; and one had only to look around him for a little while, in order to find materials for a book. But now, discovery has so completely explored the surface, and labourer after labourer has so often turned up the soil, that there is nothing, or next to nothing, remaining to be known in it; and unless it be in the description of modern inventions and modern modes of life, which lie within a corner of the field of literature, and not even in that corner which is most interesting to general readers, there is absolutely nothing new about which a man can write. While those who feel fondly but think superficially upon the subject, complain that there are no Shakspeares, and Miltons, and Bacons, and Hookers, and Taylors, in these latter times, they do not consider that the world of intellect, which lay all fresh and tempting before those intellectual Alexanders, has now been not only conquered by their intre-

pidity and strength, but trodden under the feet of their more feeble successors, till its surface has become a passage for every wayfaring man; and its history a tale which has been thrice told. Nature, like Nature's choicest productions, is ever most charming when a part of it is concealed; and they who withdraw the veil, however they may be admired for their hardihood, or however they may delight the world by the disclosures which they make, leave but sorry work for those who come after; and are reckoned inferior, chiefly because mankind are already acquainted with all that they can do.

Among all the varied themes upon which literary ingenuity or literary drudgery can be occupied, the choicest and the most permanent are the analysis of the human heart, the portraiture of the human passions, and glimpses of the habits and the habitations of those mysterious beings with whom Imagination, until her wings have been clipt by the cold and relentless hand of a desolating philosophy, has, in all ages and in all countries, peopled the world. But so thoroughly did the first adventurers gather in the vintage of delineation, in as far as the passions of men are concerned, that scarcely a single grape is left; while the axe has been laid to the root of those mysterious trees upon which the blossoms of fancy opened so fresh, and her fruit hung so luscious and so inviting.

We complain that the silly ones, who at the present time hang their harps upon the willow-trees by the river of Babylon, will not make them ring with those sublime and celestial strains, which come to us so refreshing through the long vista of years. But while we do this, we forget that, all feeble as are the personages, and all broken, all stringless, and all tuneless, as are the instruments upon which the passing wind of the day just wakens a wretched note as it goes by, those singers are in a land where those songs, which of old gave delight, are impossible, and where they would not be heeded even could they be procured. Sublimity in poetry, and in that prose which more than any poetry is sublime, must flow unbought and unbidden from the rock of Nature herself; and he whose chief object it is to measure labour, which is called intellectual, against the perishable subsistence of the day, cannot be expected to produce any thing that is not equally perishable. If we would have back again those intellectual giants who hailed the day-spring of English literature, we must put both knowledge and society in the position in which they then were,—we must have authors who write from other motives than those which induce men to follow common mechanical trades, and we must have a sufficient quantity of new knowledge to stimulate them to the work. There has now been too much research for leaving enough of novelty,

and too much division and dissection, for leaving much that is beautiful or sublime. Mankind have become too wise for wondering; and the common avocations of society have waxed too numerous, and occupy too much of men's time, for permitting them to rival in purely intellectual delights. What they demand is something which shall either help them forward in the acquirement of that money which the state of things has rendered necessary, or something over which they may while an idle hour, but which shall not so rack the judgment or so take a hold of the imagination, as to withdraw them from, or incapacitate them for, those personal pursuits and those personal enjoyments, the number, the desire, and the necessity of which increase with increasing knowledge, and advance with advancing civilization.

Sublimity and grandeur in imagination and in intellect, as well as in the material world, can exist only where there are great masses with dark spaces between, objects at which astonishment may be aroused, and gloomy obscurities, by which curiosity may be excited. This was the state of things in the olden time; but now it is as if the hammer had levelled down those sublime heights, and the whole of society, in its manners, and more particularly in its mind, is undergoing the process of Macadamization; and though the smoothness

which is thereby introduced be extremely favourable for the fetching and carrying of all sorts of marketable commodities, it answers not half so well for being said or sung.

In all this it is not meant to be said, that the present state of the world is, in as far as that foremost of all objects, human happiness, is concerned, worse than that which has produced, and which, were it to return, would again produce, literature of a higher caste: my object is to take off the smart, if I cannot altogether secure the sting, of what is said, and what upon an abstract theory and without adverting to the circumstances, deserves to be said, of the Babylonian literature of the present day; and having, as I trust, accounted for the cause, I see not why I should be quarrelled with, though I now pay some little attention to the effect which that cause, and nothing of course but that cause, has produced.

One of the most gentle, though not one of the most clear-sighted, of those seers who fell into dreams and fancies as to what the world might ultimately become, some thirty years ago, when the usual progress or management of it was a little unsettled, and when cautious men had given over saying very much about what might happen, predicted the speedy arrival of a sort of literary millenium, during which every man should become

his own author, and read nothing but what himself had written. The wits of the time gave rather a wicked interpretation of this prediction,—they alleged that writing was in the progress of so spreading out into shallowness, or so fuming away in visionary clouds, as that nobody but the author was likely to read any thing that might be likely to be produced; and they very insidiously alleged that the practice of the prophet himself rendered this the most legitimate interpretation of his words. But the event has proved that the seers and the scoffers were equally in the wrong; for though the more general diffusion of the mechanical arts of reading and writing, the increased stock of old and serviceable materials, and the smaller quantity both of skill and of industry requisite for putting those materials together, have made authorship a much more accessible and simple matter than it was even thirty years ago, yet there are, perhaps, fewer authors now who produce books either with a view of improving their own intellectual capacity, or from a conviction that they have any intellectual capacity at all, than there were at the period when this prophecy was made.

When, indeed, one looks at the most numerous, by no means the least successful, and probably, nay certainly, not the least useful of the modern schools of Babylonian literature, one finds that in-

stead of every author being the sole reader of his own books—I mean of those books which he procures to be printed, and for which he is paid—he is not only not the sole writer of them, but is guiltless of every line, from the title-page to the colophon.

If, therefore, the prophecy had been, that "no author should write his own books," then, in as far as this school, which may be styled the "Translation," or rather, inasmuch as it is pouring the same metal out of one mould into another, which should be called the "Transfusion" school of Babylonian literature, and which, by the way, is the most Babylonian, in the confusion which it occasions, both as to who are the real producers and what is the thing produced, of any other of the incomprehensible if not endless variety,—nobody would have doubted its accuracy. Notwithstanding that, under proper management, the labours of this school may be made to adapt the old literature to the taste of the day; yet it is so contrary to what one would naturally expect, that one does not need to be told that the founder of it must have combined in his own person the functions of book-maker and bookseller; and so well did this founder appreciate his own capability when he took to it, that the single and solitary work in which he attempted original authorship, is almost

the only one out of the catalogue of his publications, as numerous as the nights of the Arabian story-teller, which nobody will or can read. He has been enabled to make many a choice dinner of herbs out of the Encyclopædia; the Spelling-book has been cooked into a hundred dishes; and he has supped and made others wish to sup upon the dry fragments of the newspapers; but he has never been able to make any man, who understood any one branch of philosophy, bolt his Theory of the Universe. Nor is this at all to be wondered at, for the man who could not understand, or at least would not understand, how one volume was to be made in any other way than by making it out of a pre-existent volume, could not be expected to understand a single movement of that which was at first made out of nothing.

Pitiful as the practice of this school is, and hurtful as it is to the little portion of original intellect which such practice has not scared away from the fields of Babylonian literature, it is astonishing into what extensive use it has come; and though he by whom the school was founded cannot boast much of what he has added to the abstract value of literature, he may boast that he has played more tricks with fewer ideas than all the rest of the trade put together. Nor has he stopped here; for as he has invented, or at least brought to maturity and

into general use, a novel species of authorship, so he has been unprecedentedly liberal in the dispensation of literary honours; and upon his title-pages, and those of them who have copied after him, there are to be found more Doctors, and Reverends, and F R Ses, and especially A S Ses, than can be traced in all the muster-rolls of all the public institutions. Of the *modus operandi* of this school, it is enough to say, that a title, an author, and a basket full of books, are collected together; a drove of the most raw or needy of the writing tribe are assembled, and the wares are auctioned downwards, till some one agrees to take charge of them for less money than would pay for pens and ink to write a book of the same dimensions. If the lot happen to fall upon some fresh importation, whom the hope of literary glory has tempted from the quietude of the country, then he toils and curses away, and, ten to one, cures himself of his folly; but if, as is often the case, it falls upon one who has already sunk through all hopes, then the author plays the employer at his own game, and the books have to be rescued more than once from the limbo of the three balls, before the work be ready for being blown by distended vesicles of words all over the country. As this is the very lowest school of Babylonian literature, it may be regarded as the foundation; and as the foundations

even of the fairest structures are usually hidden in the mud, not a great deal respecting it is known, and the little that is, is not worth being recorded. Those by whom I found it mainly supported were B.—E.—S. G.—M.—R.—and W. W.

Another genuine Babylonian school, of modern foundation, is that which may be called the "Hyæna," or "Body-snatcher" school. This has more lofty pretensions than the Transfusion school; but its labours, though they have sometimes made much more noise for a month or two, are neither so useful nor so durable. This school, of which the most famous member, though not absolutely the original founder, either is now or was very lately in the trade, originated in and is supported by a sort of clubbing of wits—or, as some will have it, of want of wits, between the authors and the publishers. Their practice is, whenever any great man either literally dies, or is so removed from the scene of their practices as to be unable to detect them, to manufacture Lives of him, invent Memoirs, and collect and concoct Anecdotes, taking care to season such productions with as much of slanderous application to the living as shall give them raciness and interest, and yet taking considerable care to avoid both the statute and the whip. To the members of this school, such a character as Napoleon Bonaparte or Lord Byron forms a perfect

treasure; and though they can have nothing new to say about such characters, yet they contrive to repeat the old stories in so new a fashion, that they excite a considerable though momentary curiosity. The "Body-snatchers" are not over delicate in their taste; for when they cannot find a great warrior or a noble poet, they do not hesitate to grub up the remains of a decayed ballad-singer or departed old woman. Those persons contribute to that which is technically styled "Pure reading,"—not because that which is read is remarkable for its literary or its moral purity, but because the reading of it is reading, and nothing else—inasmuch as it does not convey, and probably is not intended to convey, the least particle of information. Like other resurrection-men, the labourers in this vocation keep themselves as much concealed as possible: however, I have understood that D.— F.— J.— L.— M.— and P.— and W.— had been most successful in bringing the practice to maturity.

A third school, and one which, though it has been attempted at different periods of Babylonian history, never was so industrious as of late years, is that which properly should be denominated the "Mephitic school" of Babylonian literature. The founders and the pupils of this school are equally obscure; but I have heard that the principal qualification for admission to it is, that the candidate

shall be so nasty in his habits, so totally without information, and so gross and vulgar in his language, as that he could not be received any where else. In consequence of this they are said to boast that no member of their school has ever deserted them to connect himself with any other. Their object seems to be to render every thing upon which they can lay their hands so offensive, as that nobody else could touch it, and thus appropriate the whole of it to themselves. I have never met, at least so far as I know, with any of the members of this school; but I have heard that B.— and C.— and G.— and J. J.— and P.— (all of course different from the same letters which belong to the other schools) are among the deepest in its practices.

It would be endless, however, to attempt a particular description of all the schools into which the ambition, or some other propensity of book-makers and book-venders, have broken the literature of Babylon the Great. Of venders I might, for instance, mention "The Kite-flyers," who endeavour to push their books into notice by pretending that they are written by some man of character, when they know quite well that they have been patched up by some of their own underlings, and at their own request, for a stipulated fee of so many farthings a page; and among makers I could enumerate the "Ruminators" or "Cud-chewers," who,

having concocted or collected a few scraps upon some subject, put them together, and endeavour to palm them upon the world in every form which a permutation of chapters or paragraphs, or even sentences, will admit: but those who are reduced to this extreme of literary poverty, and who yet have too much pride for entering the poor's house, and being supported out of the literary labours of other men, if they deserve no praise for their conduct, ought, at least, to be excused from paying taxes to criticism; and, besides, when a man's house or his head is extremely ill-furnished, and yet the man contrives to content himself with it, without being in any way burdensome to his neighbours, that man unquestionably has more merit than he who makes a greater display with that which is not his own. But these, and many other matters of an analogous nature, as they form no part of the philosophy, or of the avowed, and, therefore, of the legitimate history of Babylonian literature, could conduce to nobody's edification; and therefore they need not be brought out of that obscurity, in which their own nature and the wishes of those who practise them conspire to render it proper that they should remain.

That which has been stated in these paragraphs, though it be much more abundant in the Babylonian literature than in that of any other place, may

still be regarded as circumstantial rather than essential,—as being that which it is found expedient to do, rather than that which the parties are capable of doing; for as long as the Babylon continues to be the focus to which the talent, not only of the three nations which compose the British people, but of a very large number of foreigners, constantly is attracted, and the centre whence the productions of that talent emanate, so long must its literature continue to rank high; and though there may be some who prefer dulness, because it is cheap, there will always be others—and they will necessarily be the best, and probably the most numerous—who shall prefer that of which the merits are genuine and original. Nor can it fairly be denied, that where there is nothing to interpose between literary men, and those who always must be in the first instance the encouragers of literature, these, though like all men of business they wish to drive as advantageous bargains as ever they can, yet possess and practise that candour and liberality which are so characteristic of the more respectable part of the Babylonian merchants generally, and which have contributed so much to the enriching both of themselves and of their country.

The same disposition to be slow and wary in forming a new connexion, and equally slow and

wary in breaking off an old one, which forms part of the general character of John Bull, very often renders a first introduction to those Babylonian publishers, who are really the substantial patrons of talent, not a little difficult; and there are several instances in which the difficulty is increased, by the way in which the publisher is circumstanced with that portion of the literary corps who form, as it were, his privy council upon all points of judgment and criticism. Those authors who lounge most about booksellers' shops are never the most able or the most industrious; but they are generally persons who can stoop to little arts of flattery, which men of a superior description would either despise or be unable to manage: they therefore make it their business to find out the vulnerable points in him upon whom they dance attendance; and as he has in general no time, and sometimes though he had, not much capacity, for judging of the intrinsic merits of a work, those persons contrive to get the power of judging into their own hands: and when they have done so, it can hardly be expected that they shall not exercise it more with a view to the securing of the power which they have got, and making it a profit to themselves, than of forwarding the interests of him whom they have persuaded to trust them. Most of those who have been for a considerable time in the trade, are beset

by a host of these interested judges, who conspire together how they may best keep the bookseller to themselves and their friends; and one of the most obvious methods of doing this is to prejudice him against every stranger, especially if they be apprehensive that that stranger is possessed of talents or independence superior to their own. I could mention more than one instance of publishers, who flatter themselves that they are very knowing, and completely masters of their own decisions, and who yet are so beset by those who govern them, while they flatter and live upon them, that they dare not enter into any arrangement with a literary man. This is a state of things very much to be regretted, both for the interests of literature and for the credit of the literati themselves: but it is a state of things which when it has once taken place, is very difficult to be corrected; and perhaps the only effectual way of putting an end to it would be to import into the trade a sufficient number of well-educated and high-spirited young men, who would leave the preparing of the bills of parcels and the posting of the ledger, and become their own judges. Within the last few years this begins to be the case far more than it was formerly; and as literary men have been enabled to shake off the lumber of titled patrons, one or two more additions to the last and most improved description of publishers

would free the trade from that mass of dullness and selfishness, by which it still is in but too many instances fettered.

The great demand for books which the increased ability and desire to read have produced, whatever effect it may have had upon their quality, has prodigiously augmented their quantity; and as novelty (at least in title and appearance) is a greater recommendation to many than abstract worth, the demand for writers and makers of books goes on increasing: but the increase of the demand bears no proportion at all to that of the number of candidates for literary honours, or, perhaps, I should rather say, literary emoluments. The termination of the late war crowded the Babylon with discharged soldiers, who have very laudably endeavoured to swell the scanty allowance of their half-pay by an occasional volume of tales or travels; and the great importation of students of law from the Sister Kingdom, who resort to the Inns of Court, in order to eat their way to the privilege of addressing the judges when they get home, make a vast addition to the number. Though both these classes be very respectable in their way, and though their zeal to become literati be far from discommendable; yet whether they have been the means of improving or deteriorating the general staple of Babylonian literature, is a question much too

abstruse for my philosophy. One thing is certain: that as neither the profession which the one class have left, nor that which the other class are preparing themselves for, requires the kind of discipline which is demanded from him who would be a profound writer, neither of them can add much to the solidity of that which is published; while, as each of them has or should have a sort of provision apart from this exercise of their talents, their importation must tend to diminish the price of literary labour, and therefore they must to that extent deteriorate the quality of the talent which that labour attracts.

It would be a curious speculation as to the difference of national character, to determine why almost all the dramatic poetry, and indeed the greater part of the poetry of every kind, which is at present offered for representation or for sale, is of Irish manufacture. That it is, no one who knows what is received, and especially what is rejected, will deny; and I doubt not, that if the managers of the theatres and the publishers of books were to be questioned on the subject, they could say with truth, that as much verse from this quarter is offered to them, as would keep them going.

Upon the investigation of this singular fact I shall not enter, but shall leave it to those who have leisure, inclination, and capacity, for such sub-

jects. I may however remark, in passing, that numerous as the inhabitants of Babylon are, and great and varied as must be the talents of so vast and so active a multitude, she must import her poetry as well as her paving-stones; for as there exist not within her artificial circumference any of the means of study which are essential to the formation of a true poet, true poet of her own growth she can have none. Her sons and her daughters may try to make rhymes, and they do try to make them; and those rhymes may be accurate in their syllables, musical in their sound, correct in their mythology, or have any of the other artificial attributes which belong to the external structure of poetry: but they have not, and they cannot have, that animating spirit which constitutes the real power and the universal charm of song. That which people see or enjoy, always makes a more powerful impression upon them than that which they merely think; and as all that a Babylonian sees or enjoys is artificial, art must always give the principal tone to whatever he does or writes. What the poet of the world understands the worst, is by them understood the best, and *vice versâ;* so that what he uses as the illustration, they use as the subject, and what he uses as the subject, they use as the illustration. A true poet—one whose beauties all mankind would feel—illustrates and amplifies the

works of art and the practices of life by figures drawn from nature, and as the illustration has more grandeur in it than that which it is employed to illustrate, the effect is heightened by the operation: but one, who has been constantly among things and occurrences which are artificial, naturally employs the subjects of art for the purpose of explaining and amplifying nature; and as the illustration is less dignified than that which it is used to illustrate, the effect of the whole is diminished. Thus the poet would compare a modest female covered with a veil, to the moon half obscured by clouds; but the chance, nay the certainty would be, that your Babylonian versifier would compare the shrouded moon to the veiled lady. If this instance be not decisive enough, try another one. To say that the gas-lamp at the corner of the square shines like the sun in his meridian splendour, though a little hyperbolical, gives an air of grandeur to the lamp; but if you go about to heighten one's impression of the majesty of the sun, by saying that his splendour is equal to, or even that it exceeds, that of the gas-lamp at the corner of the square, the accession made is any thing but that of sublimity. Just in the same manner, if you were to call a perfumer's shop fragrant as Arabian groves, you would ennoble the shop; but if you were to say that the groves of

Arabia were fragrant as the shop, even though you stated that it belonged to his most Gracious Majesty's perfumer, the groves would not gain much by the compliment.

Of the ludicrous, as connected with human nature, the Babylonian bards, from the opportunities which they have of observing it in all its whims and peculiarities, have necessarily a very lively perception; and therefore such of them as have humour, can be very droll: though even their drollery, except when they imitate the writings of others, as in the case of the "Rejected Addresses," cannot be properly appreciated without the bills of mortality. When, however, they attempt to be tender or sentimental, they fail most egregiously; for, besides their ignorance of nature, they have no means of being acquainted with that which constitutes the moral charm of poetry. Business and amusement so completely occupy the minds of people in a great city, and in Babylon the Great in an especial manner—people are so intent upon the gratification of their appetites, and have time to think so little beyond that and the means of attaining it, that though they may be very honest, they never can be absolutely pure in heart or very elevated in sentiment. Hence, when they attempt to become tender, they succeed merely in being silly; when they aim at being natural, they become only non-

sensical; and when they labour to be sublime, that which they produce is mere fustian.

These qualities necessarily belong to all classes of them, learned and unlearned; and when, as is sometimes the case, they happen to have devoted a considerable portion of their time to the poets of antiquity, their productions become the most motley and incongruous things imaginable; for the difference between the figurative and mythological style of the ancients, and the common-place perceptions of those who can observe only in a crowd, is so great, that when the one is attempted to be grafted on the other—as in the poetic tentations of Leigh Hunt, for instance—the combination is so ill sorted, that it requires no common measure of good-nature to avoid laughing, and no small measure of dulness to keep oneself from being disgusted.

As a proof of the total ignorance of nature that obtains among the singers of Babylon, I may mention that one of the most bepraised of the day—one too of the more amiable sex, who, if they study any thing, are always supposed to study those flowers which in sweetness and in beauty are understood to be so emblematical of themselves—actually does not know the difference, even in colour, between the blossom of the apple-tree and that of the pear. Miss Landon, the authoress of "The Improvisatrice, and other Poems," upon whom

critics say (and I shall not question the truth of their saying) that the breathing of Babylonian song has become more sweet, more sentimental, and more true to nature, than upon any other of her tuneful sisters of either sex, in a little ode to the month of April—the month, of all months in the year, the best adapted for Babylonian song—has the following lines:—

> "The apple-blossom's shower of pearl,
> The pear-tree's rosier hue,
> As beautiful as woman's blush,
> As evanescent too!"

Now, had the gentle authoress of these pretty lines—and, in as far as mere sound is concerned, they are very pretty—taken council of the first fruit-gardener that she met, he could have told her that the blossom of the apple, which she compares to "pearl," is tinted with a very fine crimson, and that the "rosier hue" of all the varieties of the pear-tree declines blushing at all, just as is the case with the more stubborn part of the sex, and remains absolutely and all along white. But this is not the only illustration of the theory which I have laid down, that may be drawn from those four lines; for the illustration is, as I have said, drawn from human nature and human ornament. The white blossom of the apple-tree and the rosier one of the pear, are both said to be "as beautiful

as woman's blush;" and the white one is compared, not to flakes of snow, which when falling it somewhat resembles, but to a "shower of pearl"—a species of rain which could only be imagined by an incautious miss, who had broken her necklace before a looking-glass. Poets have sometimes compared drops of dew to pearls, on account, doubtless, of their roundness and their lustre, and of that irridescence which, though not in the same degree, belongs to them both; and they have occasionally made the same comparison with regard to a shower of rain: and this tuneful sister, copying after the poet's copy of a copy, and not after his original, has seen meet to scatter the pearls in a shower of rain, and make them a fit emblem for the crimson-tinted leaves of the apple-blossom. The comparison of both the red and the white to "woman's blush," even allowing the good lady the poetical license of making the exchange between the two trees, has something in it which is exceedingly droll. The blush of a woman can of course resemble the blossom of a tree in nothing except in colour, because, allowing the said blossom to remain but for ten days, it would be utterly impossible to imagine that the most firm-faced lady in the world could keep up the same blush for half the time; and therefore the assertion made is, that the blush must

be sometimes rosy, and sometimes of the colour of pearl.

The lines of this lady form so perfect an illustration of the principles which I have stated, that I cannot avoid quoting a few more:

> "The purple light, that, like a sigh
> Comes from the violet bed;
> As there the perfumes of the East
> Had all their odours shed:
> The wild briar rose a fragrant cup
> To hold the Morning's tear;
> The bird's-eye like a sapphire star;
> The primrose pale—like fear!"

"The purple light" may pass, although, unless when it comes through a city fog, or a stained window or curtain, it is any thing but purple; but the idea of light coming from a "violet-bed," and coming "like a sigh" too, as if it were sorry to rise, is an idea which would not have occurred, except to one much more familiar with sighs, and violets, and beds, than with the grey dawn of an April morning. The simile, too, is perfectly Babylonian; for one would not call the fragrant plants of the East "perfumes," and speak about their shedding "odours;" because, as applied to them, the perfume and the odour are exactly the same thing. Miss Landon must, therefore, have been thinking

of the bottles and gallipots of perfumery upon her own toilette, and the sweet odour which diffused itself when the stoppers and tops were removed. The cup and the tear, though pretty enough in their way, put one so much in mind of a little girl crying for her breakfast, that the whole of the charm is dispelled; and as for the "sapphire star," it would be so like the colour of the sky itself, that not even Miss Herschel, far less Miss Landon, could get a sight of it. "The primrose pale—like fear," is, however, the cream of the whole. If she had been to describe that plant by any thing connected with human nature, she ought to have said "yellow—like the jaundice;" for to tell any one who does not know what a primrose is like, (and they of course are the only persons that need to be told,) that it is like fear, is calculated to give them about as accurate a perception of it as the blind man derived from his friend's labours to give him a correct notion of the colour of scarlet; "Oh! I understand it now," said the blind man at the close of the lecture; "it is exactly like the sound of a trumpet:" and just in the same manner may the daughters of Babylon, whose fairy feet have never twinkled the length of Primrose Hill, say to their tuneful sister, "Oh! I understand what a primrose is like now; it is just like what I felt when the ghost peeped in at the folding-doors."

Enough, however, of the peculiarities of Babylonian song; and enough of the analysis of Babylonian literature. The portion of it which is intended for the generality of the world is, like every thing else of Babylonian manufacture, well calculated for fetching its price, and keeping up its character in the market; and when this has been said, the measure of justice to it is full. There is, however, one department which is so gigantic and so peculiar to the Great City as to merit a more complete analysis; and to that analysis I shall proceed in the next Chapter.

CHAPTER III.

THE PRESS *a*.

" The press, in this, is like the eye,—
It sees all else, but cannot spy
Its own complexion, till you show it,
By holding up the mirror to it:
'Tis, as times go, the best—the worst
Of things,—most wholesome, most accurst."

Of all the instruments of power—of all the engines or contrivances of man, whether physical, moral, or political, there is none which is by any means to be compared for rapidity, for extent, and for strength of effect, with that, which, having the throne of its dominion and the centre of its ramifications in Babylon the Great, extends its control over a wider and more willing empire than any over which a mere monarch swayed the sceptre, under the plain and unpretending name of The Press. In every contrivance, and in every art, by which man can hold communion with man, or in virtue of which one man can profit by being

profitable to his fellows, the march of modern times has been grand and rapid beyond all precedent; but in no one of these cases, all of which have demonstrated the truth of the Baconian axiom, that "knowledge is power," has there been any thing contrived like that mightiest of intellectual engines, which sees every thing of good or of ill in the very moment that it is happening, and which, ere the sun has thrice girdled the world, tells the tale of it—fearlessly proclaiming the glory or the shame, to all the millions of the British public; and from them diffusing it, ere many weeks and months have run their course, to every part of the habitable globe.

Babylon the Great may boast much and most worthily of the thickening crowd of her improvements, of the constantly accumulating masses of her wealth, of the every-day advances of her artizans, in the perfection of every thing mechanical; and in the accessions which every season, every week, and every day, makes to the enjoyments and the luxury of her population. She may bid the astonished nations come and see what the human mind, undebased by bigotry and superstition, can invent; and what the human hand, unchained by slavery, can execute: but if she would point to the most stupendous invention to which even she has given birth—if she would make known the most

invincible auxiliary of improvement and liberty, which she has nurtured to perfection,—then she would bid them look at the thousands and ten thousands of channels by which she pours upon the world that most wholesome and necessary of all knowledge—the knowledge of itself. I do not say that they to whom the management of this mighty engine is committed, are all of them, or even any of them, the very foremost men of their age, either in point of moral or of intellectual superiority. I have said that of all gigantic erections, the foundations are laid deep in the dust; and I need not conceal that many of those things which the press brings to light, are such as men of the very highest order could not be supposed to occupy themselves about: but still the very fact, that the press lets in daylight, not only upon all the machinery of public life, but of that of private, when it goes out of order—that no machination against the liberty, the safety, or the prosperity of society, can be carried on without the press knowing of it and telling of it,—is evidence that, while it remains in vigour, the people who enjoy it can neither be enslaved nor corrupted.

It would be both out of my way and out of my philosophy, to sit down and determine whether the press—that is, those periodical journals which are called the press, be the parents or the children of

that which is called public opinion. In their most valuable and most legitimate exercise they are, strictly speaking, the collectors of the facts from which that opinion, whatever it is, has to be formed; and in this capacity they are infinitely more valuable than if the whole of those who have the management of them were Solons and Aristotles. The great object to be arrived at, in making a people wise and temperate, is to arm them with the knowledge of every truth that can in any way bear upon their opinions or on their conduct; and so long as they are thus armed, there need be no great apprehension that their opinions shall not be just, and their conduct orderly. It is in this way that the press, even amid a great deal of erroneous opinion and angry practice on the part of those by whom it has been conducted, has contributed, more perhaps than any thing else, to raise England to her present condition. Whatever of noble and praiseworthy is delivered in Senate or in Court, receives the approbation of the whole people, before the air which the first uttering of it put in motion has ceased to vibrate; and when any thing amiss is uttered there, the condemnation of an intelligent public follows with equal rapidity and equal effect. In consequence of the press, the public men of modern England stand upon a wider arena and address themselves to a more extended audience,

than they of any other age or country. Whether they speak for the weal of man, or for his woe—whether they seek to build higher and polish brighter the glory of their country and of mankind—or whether their aim be to cast down and to tarnish,—the pen of the recorder is at their side, and every word which they utter is instantly sent to the judgment of the whole people. This is the grand restraint which keeps the bad and selfish motives and passions within due bounds, and which draws out, encourages, and procures to be rewarded, those of the opposite and more estimable description.

The labour by which all this is brought about is great; and though the labourers be by no means few, their office is no sinecure. One who has not visited all the public places in the British metropolis, who has not followed the march of justice, and watched the slow but silent progress of invention and discovery, together with the ebbings and flowings of public spirit throughout the whole land—one who has not done all this, and collated all that he has heard and seen with the record and the resemblance of it furnished by the public press, can have no idea either of the extent or of the accuracy of its labours. You have, for instance, witnessed and listened to a great debate in each House of Parliament, upon which a mass of fact, a volume

of eloquence, and a range of subjects, has been displayed, at which you were utterly confounded, and the hundredth part of which, amid the agitation, the changes, and the peals of cheering, you were unable to remember, or even to understand; but if you have so been, and if on the succeeding morning, after the lapse of about two or three brief hours from the close of the display, you have examined one of the more able, respectable, and trustworthy of the morning papers, you must have found that all that you had forgotten was recorded, and all that you had been unable to understand was made plain and orderly there—that leaving out, with admirable tact, such speeches and such portions of speeches as added nothing but length to the debate, though you would have wanted the excitement of the oral delivery, you might, in the remotest province, or at the most distant period of time, have had a far more informed judgment of the merits of the question, than though you had listened to all the arguments yourself. Yes—in less time than you could have imagined it was possible to copy it out by the swiftest penman, the longest debate in which the Senators of England can be engaged, or the most intricate case with which any of the English Courts of law can be occupied, is not only written accurately and at length, but printed, and in the hands of every man in the capital who can read,

and spreading over the whole country like wild-fire. An organization which can perform so mighty an effort as this, even granting that it is more of a mechanical than an intellectual nature, is worthy not only of being encouraged for its utility, but of being known and studied for its curiosity.

When you farther think upon the number of other subjects about which the press interests itself, and the early and accurate information which it procures upon them all, you cease to wonder why an Englishman feels so very uncomfortable when deprived of his newspaper; and begin to find out that that invariable question of "What news?" with which one Englishman salutes another upon meeting, has a wider meaning than the mere gossip of the morning, and that he who puts it has, in fact, asked what all the world has been doing, in all the multiplicity of its employments, since the last chapter of its history came abroad.

It has been said that the avidity with which men now always read newspapers, and the disposition that many have to content themselves with that species of reading, has been injurious to the profundity of thought, and for that reason to the diffusion of more substantial and permanent literature. But the majority of men every where, and more especially in a place of so much wealth and activity, and so little calmness and reflection, as the

Great Babylon, have no disposition—and though they had, no leisure, either for studying minutely the past history of the world, or going far or deeply into the arcana of science; and hence, if they did not read newspapers, they would read nothing at all; and thus they would not only be ignorant of the past and the theoretical, but ignorant of the practice of the day. For active men—men whose business it is to conduct either their own affairs or the affairs of nations, contemporary knowledge is by far the most useful; and in order to qualify a man for the amusements, the business, or even the government, of the world, the periodical productions of the Babylonian press form a much more valuable library than all that ever poet sung, or philosopher speculated.

It has again been said, that the productions of the press are produced so hastily, and with so very anxious a desire to include every thing, that they are apt to mislead by their crudeness and offend by their vulgarity; that there are many things in them which are unsafe, and many others which it is absolutely sickening, to read; and that it would be better if they were manufactured by a more slow and careful process, so that every thing in them might be made both true and tasteful, by leaving out all which had not these qualities. It seems, however, to be a general law of man himself, and

of every thing that man produces, that great advantages cannot be had, unless great faults be taken along with them; and that, if you be over fastidious, you must lose the good along with the evil. So long as human nature, or that which human nature produces, retains sufficient vigour for being energetic, the one and the other must occasionally break into deformities and bend into errors.

It has been especially objected to the press, that it has given currency to opinions and disclosed practices, the one of which were hostile to the stability and the other hurtful to the purity of the existing state of society; but granting that the press has occasionally been a little too free in its opinions and a little too vulgar in its details, both the one and the other have been productive of good—of far more good than they have ever produced evil. In the first of these respects, it is far better that a doubtful or even a dangerous doctrine be stated publicly, than that it be bandied about from individual to individual, as though it were of too mysterious a nature for meeting the light. They who are afraid that the attachment of society to what is good can be shaken by any thing that can, in an age of intelligence and discussion, be printed, know so little of the nature of man and the organization of society, that they may be rated merely as children, of a longer stand-

ing indeed, but of a smaller growth. It is in the dark only that children are afraid; for, as they know not what things the hidden space may contain, their consciousness of their own weakness ever peoples it with those which are alarming; but the moment that light comes, the darkness vanishes, and all the subjects of terror which it enabled the fearful mind to create out of nothing vanish along with it. It is just the same in philosophy, in politics, and in religion; and, whatever may be the state of the rest of the world, one may be always sure that they who are alarmed at any thing that can be written, are yet in the dark—in doubt as to the real value of that for the stability of which they are alarmed. The real friends of those matters may be very thankful for what the press has done, even in those respects: for if it has been the cause of discussing some points, upon which those who wished one way are yet apprehensive that truth might lie on the other, it has, in all the more important cases, shown that those apprehensions were groundless; and if it has sometimes misled foolish men to the saying or the doing of foolish things, it has, in instances a hundred to one, pointed out the right, and confirmed mankind in their attachment to it.

The world, at least the British world, is now somewhat too well informed, for being either school-

ed or governed by dogmas which it does not understand; and therefore it is not possible to conceive a surer means of bringing British institutions into suspicion and ultimate contempt, than to imagine, or give cause for imagining, that it is any body's interest to conceal any thing about them.

The last three or four years have done more, and it is the press mainly which has been the instrument in the doing of it, toward the cleaning away of this pernicious darkness, than could well have been imagined in so short a time; and no one can tell how closely the bounds of relationship between the rulers and the ruled have been drawn in consequence. Each party has seen that its interests are not only most secure in existence, but most certain of being advanced, when they are shown to be in accordance with the interests of the others. The press, which has been, as it were, the herald between the parties, has brought this about, and its having done so has merit and magnitude enough to cover a multitude of small political sins.

With regard to the indecencies with which the press stands charged, there can be no doubt that they have had a wholesome effect upon society, even although they have not originated from pure motives, or been directed against the proper persons; for if men find that even a small offence will come to the notice of the whole country, they can

have no hope that a greater one shall escape. Even personal matters—matters which, in a less informed and rational state of society, would, if published, have set people together by the ears, have not been without their advantages; and in this way the scorn which has been brought down upon one individual, has spared to hundreds both the shame and the remorse of similar offences.

That with all its imperfections (and that it has not many imperfections, I am far from supposing) the press has become, as it were, a new civil and criminal code—a law which keeps people on the alert, and compels them to be circumspect without the prowling of informers, the wrangling of barristers, the solemnity of judges, and the disgrace of punishments,—is a truth which cannot be denied; and since it came into universal and vigorous action, it has not only been more efficacious in bringing actual offenders to justice, but more wholesome in preventing the commission of crime, and consequently securing the practice of virtue, than all the old legal machinery put together. Indeed, the laws of no country can be properly efficient without such an auxiliary; and those Governments which either prohibit this engine altogether, or fetter its exercise in any other way than by making those who use it for improper purposes amenable to justice after they have done wrong, are, to that

extent, the encouragers alike of public corruption and of private vice.

It is through the medium of the press only, that that greatest of all power—public opinion, can exist in so prompt and effective a manner as to be of any great practical use; and where this is not the case, however religion may be propagated and law executed, there is something wanting to keep mankind right, and more to stimulate them to improvement. The one of those powers has no influence upon men, unless when they are very good; and the fact, that in England infrequency of crime does not accompany severity of punishment, shows that the law, at least in certain cases, has no very strong preventive effect. Religion is supposed to operate in making a man stand well in the estimation of his own conscience, and of Him of whom that conscience is supposed to be the vicegerent; and law, again, comes in with its punishment when the conventional statutes of society have been broken. But between those extremes there lies a wide space—a space in which a man has no rule to guide him, and no statute upon which he can be tried, but the opinions of his fellow-men; and hence it is, that the dissemination of those opinions freely and rapidly, or rather the circulation of the facts, for every man to give his judgment upon them, tends so much to preserve a wholesome state of society.

One may, without much fear of contradiction, pronounce that while the same assiduity, the same intelligence, and the same boldness, which at present send all public and many private transactions in England instantly before a jury of the whole country, without any sophist to darken them or any special pleader to bend them to a side, the intelligence, the freedom, and the consequent prosperity and security of the country rest upon a far firmer basis, than if a constitution of the most Utopian purity were established and placed beyond the possibility of theoretical corruption. That which is well constructed at first is good, but that which has in itself a principle of repair and reproduction is better. The stream which is clear at the fountain, is worthy of being prized there; but that which works itself clear as it runs, is the most wholesome throughout its course.

In these remarks, I have not alluded to the political differences, the practical details, or the peculiar differences of those forms under which the periodical literature of England appears. I have adverted merely to the fact of its existence, taking it for granted that it could exist without any control from parties or individuals, or else with the bias of one publication toward one side so balancing that of another publication toward another, as that the whole taken together might be accounted

as standing tolerably straight. I shall now mention the different classes into which the vehicles of this periodical literature may be arranged; and having done so, I shall then state at least my opinion of what struck me as the most remarkable ones in each class.

The Babylonian journals may with propriety be divided into four great classes, in respect both of their nature and of the periods at the end of which they appear. There are first, the daily papers,—those in which the information is presumed to be all fresh and original—or at least not taken at second hand from any other metropolitan journal. Those daily papers consist of nothing but news, politics, critical disquisitions of the events of the day, and commercial, literary, and fashionable notices. The second class are those which are published weekly. Of them a considerable number are manufactured out of the daily papers, and served up, with a few articles of original matter as Sunday reading, chiefly to those who are either unable to procure the daily papers or have not time to read them. But in addition to these there are others, consisting partly of gleanings from books and partly of original disquisitions, of which, as might be supposed, the merits are very various. The third class, like the new moon, make their appearance once a month; and as their period of

preparation is longer, the materials of which they are composed are understood to be more profound, or at all events more laboured and heavy. The fourth class make their appearance quarterly: they are few in number, and confined chiefly to scientific and literary subjects. Besides these four regular and permanent classes, there are a few that are annual, and a few others which are irregular in their appearance; but these are not very numerous, neither is their value much to be boasted of.

CHAPTER IV.

THE PRESS 6.

"Diurnals writ for regulation
Of lying, to inform the nation."

THE times when one lie was as acceptable to the Editor of a daily paper as two truths—inasmuch as it furnished him with one paragraph in the assertion and another in the contradiction, have, in as far at least as the more respectable of the modern Newspapers are concerned, passed away; and not only this, but it has become in a great measure unnecessary, that each of those personages should have his political preserve—his "balance of power," his standing army and militia *versus* each other, or some such interminable theme of schoolboy logic, with which he could sport away when matters were scanty. The difficulty now is, not how, with large letters and wide spaces, the events of the day, as found or as fabricated, can be so spaced out as to cover the paper, but how they

shall be so condensed and shortened as to find room in it.

I do not mean to say that this improvement has been owing to any voluntary increase of editorial talents and virtue; for there is no need of defending so doubtful a position as this, while so satisfactory a reason is at hand in the greater number of occurrences, and the greater readiness with which, in consequence of the superior facility of conveyance, accounts of those occurrences can be obtained. Reporters for the daily newspapers are now reckoned as necessary adjuncts as the woolsack in the Lords, the sounding-box in the Commons, wigs in a Court of Law, or worship among a quorum of magistrates; and accordingly we find that, with the exception of their Lordships, who allow nobody to sit in their presence lest they should fall asleep, seats for those who shall tell the world what is said and done are as carefully provided, and as fully and as profitably occupied, as for and by those by whom the things reported are said and done. In addition to this, men with pens in their hands and inkhorns at their sides are prowling about in every public, and in almost every private place of the Babylon, so that not a mouse can stir, of which somebody shall not write down the history. Farther, every mail-coach and every packet, in their daily and almost hourly arrivals, come with a certain quan-

tity of information. Indeed the materials are thus rendered so abundant, that in this department there is no temptation, and hardly any room, for inserting that which is not true.

But although, in consequence of this great increase of correct information, the manufacturer of a newspaper be spared the trouble of lying for himself, and in his own person, he has still room and temptation enough for giving currency to the lies of others; and therefore, though the editors of the Babylonian diurnals be as persons exempted from the satire of the poet, the diurnals themselves, as things, are as much within the lash of that satire as ever. There are so many visitors in the Babylon, possessing more money than wits, and so many of the Babylonians themselves constructed exactly after the same fashion, that all that an adventurer requires, in order to possess himself of their money upon easy terms, is to procure circulation to the praises of some article which, though it may be as common as fog and as useless as dust in the Babylonian winter and summer, he pretends to have discovered or invented for the sole benefit of that public, to whose health, whose beauty, whose comfort, or whose wealth, he pretends that he comes in all the disinterestedness and in all the power of a ministering angel. Medicines, which not even the vender could have courage to give to

a cur that had bit him in the streets, if he were forced to avow himself, to stand by and to abide the issue—cosmetics, which would stain a shoe or disfigure a lamp-post—lotteries, in which gaining the whole would be ruin to a very ample fortune—teachers, who have never themselves been instructed, and who therefore cannot instruct others—projectors, who try to gain that living by something new, which they have failed in by every thing existent—authors, like myself, of whose lumbering lucubrations nobody would ever think of reading a single line, if its merits were not previously recorded in the diurnal oracle,—these, and a thousand others, all different in degree and in mode, but all aiming at the same object, are adequate to the supply of as ample a commodity of lying as a man of the most giant conscience could desire.

But the grand source to which the Babylonian journals look for their emoluments, is the crowded advertisements of the redundancies and wants of the public. The immense mass of these which appears every day, produces a very considerable revenue to the State, besides affording such a profit to the journalist, as enables him to carry on the more laborious but less lucrative departments of his singular profession. Nor do they, by any means, furnish either an inaccurate or an uninteresting picture of what is going on; and perhaps nothing enables

a stranger to form a more correct idea of the great wealth of the Babylon, the rapidity with which it circulates from hand to hand, and the readiness with which every species of property and of labour finds both its value and its price, than a glance over the Morning papers; and when it is considered that a considerable number of persons take an interest in each of the thousand or two thousand advertisements which make their appearance every day, one can form some estimate of the great hold which the daily papers take upon the commercial world, and the great services which they render it.

Reports of public transactions, and of such private ones as it is supposed will furnish interest or amusement to the public, giving publicity to every desire of the man of business which can be shaped into words and printed as an advertisement, and lending the bellows to all descriptions of quacks to blow the fire withal, form the three staple elements or avocations of the daily journalist; and the merit and consequent circulation of his journal depend very much upon the skill and honesty that he displays in the first of these, while his reward is very much in proportion to his encouragement in the second of them. Independently of these, however, almost every journalist has his underplot—his part which he plays, his favourites whom he patronises, and his enemies whom he pelts and per-

secutes, either for his own interest, or sometimes his whim, directly; or for his own interest, through the medium of a party by which he is praised and patronised, and which he, as in duty bound, praises and patronises in return. In proportion as he is absolved from the trammels of party, he becomes, *cæteris paribus*, a safer guide in all matters of argument from the facts; but even in the most independent of the journals, and in those which are conducted by persons of the greatest talents, the argumentative part is seldom the most valuable. One who writes of the day and for the day, and who both knows and wishes that the topic about which he to-day concerns himself so much shall be forgotten, in order to leave the field clear for the topic—very different, perchance, both in its nature and in the spirit in which it is discussed—of the morrow, has no time and no temptation to go to the bottom of any subject. Both interest and necessity demand that what he says, while it sparkles to the eye of the reader, should not take much study in the comprehension; because those who read this part of a newspaper with any view to utility, read it not as the basis of profound thought, or indeed of any thought at all, but merely adopt and use it as a species of ready-made conversation, which shall enable them to carry on the external formalities of speech at the same time that the in-

ternal machinery is drudging away at the intricacies of their own business. Hundreds of men whom you meet on the Exchange, the pavé, or the lounges, speak the Times, the Chronicle, the Herald, or the Post, at the same time that the inward thought is just as unconscious of the outward words, as though they were at the opposite extremities of the Island.

Of the better established and more effective daily journals, the power has become so great, that they may be regarded as patronizing even the most lofty and important political parties, rather than as being patronized by them; and of this description of newspapers, though all have their favourites—men whom they support through good report and through bad, and the objects of their vengeance—men whom they traduce through bad report and through good; yet it is not because they hope for advantage at the hands of the one, or dread harm at the hands of the other. I by no means say that they are too pure for being bribed; but many of them are so rich that the thing would be expensive, others so wretched that even the smallest bribe would be thrown away, and all watch over each with such lynx-eyed jealousy, that a matter of this kind could not be carried on to any extent without being known, and if known would so sink the party in the estimation of the public, as that no bribe

could compensate even for the pecuniary loss. When it is considered that at least twenty, or perhaps thirty thousand pounds a-year, must be expended upon a properly conducted morning paper, without allowing a single shilling of profit to the proprietors, a judgment may be formed of the nature of the bribe (even supposing them to be bribable) that could compensate them for the loss of the public patronage, or even tempt them to bring it into jeopardy. In times of peace, and with men in the House of Commons so much masters of Dilworth as Mr. Hume, it would be difficult even for the Chancellor of the Exchequer himself—supposing England to have a Chancellor that needed to resort to such a measure—to hedge into a corner as much money as would suffice for buying the control of a well-established morning paper, and were he to attempt a measure of the kind, he would have, ere he could scatter it through his estimates, to confide it to so many persons, that one or other of them would be almost sure to reveal it, and then the disgrace of the discovery would more than outweigh any advantage that could be procured from the bribe.

In times of war indeed, when the hope of lucrative employment on the one hand, and the dislike of affording the lucre without any tangible compensation on the other, stir up the passions of men,

till upon both sides they be subject to momentary privations of reason—when they hope every thing, fear every thing, and of course believe any thing, one could conceive the possibility of such arrangements, as daily newspapers being under the control and in the pay of political parties; and it is also possible that, after the direct connexion has been dissolved through fear of the disclosure which the return of peace and reason would enable people to make, there may exist a species of flirtation between the divorced spouses, just in the same manner as we—very rarely—hear of such flirtations following divorces in private life: but I think I have had considerable opportunities of inquiring into this matter, I am sure I did not neglect those opportunities, and the impression left upon my mind is, at least when I was studying the Babylonian press, that, though a few underlings, both in office and clamorous because not in office, affected to take the Elephant under their little bat wings, not one of them succeeded; and from all that I could observe or hear, I feel convinced, that those which are the most free from all attempts of this kind, are at once the most successful and the most lucrative.

The daily newspapers vary in the labour, the expense, and the value of their contents, with the periods at which they appear; the Morning papers

being those which collect, at great expense and with varied shades of taste, the transactions of a whole day, while the Evening ones, in the more costly departments, content themselves with borrowing from these, and adding such matters of the morning as can be collected and put in types before two or three o'clock—the hour at which they usually go to press. The Morning paper is therefore to be regarded as the true Babylonian diurnal, while the Evening one is little better than a second edition, abridged in the main, but with some few things added, got up against the departure of the post for the information of the provinces.—Thus the Morning paper has not only the more extensive and the more important duty to perform, but it has to perform it in a much shorter and much more inconvenient time; while the addition that is thereby made to the expense, cannot be less, in the case of a paper which is properly conducted, than from twelve to fifteen thousand pounds a-year. The Morning paper must procure for itself accounts of almost every thing that happens after mid day; and when the debates in Parliament are stormy and prolonged, it must contrive to get as much matter corrected and printed between eight o'clock in the evening—the earliest hour at which important debates usually begin, and eight o'clock on the following morning—the time at which, and

upon an average previous to which, the papers are usually published, as would make a tolerably-sized and by no means uninteresting volume.

Those slow-going personages who call themselves literary men, because, after cudgelling their brains for one six months, they are enabled to produce a little book upon a less subject during the next six, would be astonished if they were to behold with what amazing rapidity, and yet with what perfect accuracy, this semi-intellectual and semi-mechanical engine—which after all, has more intellect and more mechanism in it than any other engine with which I am acquainted—does its work; and yet the method is so systematic, and, to those who have been for some time habituated to it, so simple, that it is not accounted the most honourable, neither is it the best rewarded, department of Babylonian literature. Still, however, it is one of the most arduous; and as a temporary employment perhaps it is, to those by whom it is now, in the minor papers at least, in a great measure monopolized—the Irish students of law attending the Inns of Court, the most useful, inasmuch as it gives them great facility in understanding, remembering, and therefore replying to, what is said.

The way in which it is managed is this: there are connected with the paper some fifteen or twenty reporters, who are all retained, and occasionally

occupied in attending and writing accounts of public meetings, and dinners, and trials, and sporting-matches, and all sorts of matters in which people are supposed to take any interest, throughout the whole year. At the commencement of the Session of Parliament these are mustered in London: one or two of them are delegated to take charge of the more important cases in the Courts of law; one or two more, who are often either superannuated or supernumerary, are appointed to look after the Peers, report when it pleases their Lordships that there shall be no debate, and take a part, and ask assistance for the remainder, when their said Lordships are visited by the spirit of eloquence: and these two detachments being separated, the remaining and more effective men are set to note down the words of the wisdom of St. Stephen's. This they do, by attending the House in rotation for a longer or a shorter time, according to the effective strength of the corps, taking notes in any way that they may find most convenient while there, and then hurrying away to their respective offices, to write at length that of which they have taken notes. The reporters of a morning paper, of any Parliamentary character, never remain longer than an hour at a time; and unless it be when a debate lasts very long, is in one House only, and is of the utmost importance, they seldom remain a shorter

time than three quarters of an hour. If the speech be an eloquent one, and delivered with even a moderate degree of rapidity, the quantity of notes which may be taken during three quarters of an hour, will extend from a column to two columns of the smallest print in one of the largest-sized newspapers: and as it frequently happens that the same individual has to attend the House twice during a debate, it is possible that one reporter may have to write as much in the course of one night, as would form a pamphlet of three or four sheets octavo.—The mere mechanical performance of this would be a task of no very easy accomplishment; and the difficulty is increased by the necessity of understanding not only all the bearings of the subject under discussion, but all the extraneous matters that are employed in the illustration of it, and being able to quote correctly all the "ends of verse, and sayings of philosophers," wherewith the orators season it.—It is thus that the matter is acquired.

But after the acquisition of it, it is still to be composed into types, the proofs have to be corrected, the whole made up into columns and pages, and so sent to press, whence it is expected to issue, and come in perfect to every Babylonian table, as regularly as the rolls and butter. This again would appear to be a task of difficult and even impossi-

ble accomplishment; but yet it is done, and done with such apparent ease and regularity, that they who are habituated to it consider it nothing more than an every-day business—so every day indeed, that though failure in it would be attended with blame, success is not accounted worthy of any of the praise of merit.

In the apartment—and it is sometimes neither a very large nor a very wholesome apartment—where the reports are written out, it may happen that there are ten individuals all writing at the same instant; and so mingling their voices in jokes, tales, inquiries after quotations, and so breaking the eloquence with pauses for tankards of ale, and basins of tea, and mutton chops, and German sausages, and all other materials for supporting and strengthening the carnal man, that it would puzzle all the conjurors in the world, except those conjurors at the waving of whose wands the printed eloquence makes its appearance, to find out how any work of any kind could be done amid a confusion of sound and of circumstances so perfectly Babylonian. But it seems that if there be stamina in the mind, and if the spur of necessity be applied to it with sufficient smartness, it can not only work, but work as orderly as a mathematician and as strongly as a giant, even when circumstances seem the least favourable for its exercise. Notwithstanding all the

wit, all the ribaldry, and all the replenishing which the exhaustion of such steam-engine-like labour requires, each of them contrives, at the end of every minute or two, to toss from him a slip of paper so carefully written, that it requires no future correction; and so close to the subject, that he of whose speech it forms a part has no disposition to quarrel with it. In consequence of this promptitude and division of labour, it very often happens, that before a Parliamentary orator has got halfway to his peroration, the editor, or other director, is reading in print the opening part of his speech, and cudgelling his editorial intellect as to how he may give it effect or answer, according as it happens to fall in or not fall in with the view which it pleases or suits his editorial ardour or his editorial policy to take of the matter at issue.

When any provincial matter of sufficient importance to the energy and the emulation of the Babylonian press is going on, the efforts which it can make are, if possible, still more wonderful. There have been instances in which long, laborious, and learned pleadings of counsel have been delivered, at not a very early hour of the day, sent up to town from a distance of forty, fifty, or sixty miles, printed, published, returned back again, read by the counsel who delivered them, and by him pronounced to be a faithful copy, not only of his

meaning, but of his words, before the opening of the Court called him to a renewal of his labours on the following morning. There are instances too, in which lengthened reports have been copied out upon the top of a mail-coach; and when an important trial takes place within some twenty or thirty miles, it is printed without much more loss of time than if it took place at the Babylonian Guildhall, or in the Courts or Chapel at Westminster.

It is this wonderful celerity and this unquestionable accuracy in the Babylonian press, that makes it an engine which cannot be imitated, or indeed understood, in any other place,—which will at least make it a long time before the same merits can belong to the press in any other place. They can exist only where there is general information and a reasonable share of liberty; and even where these are, they cannot exist without a dense population, and a population as wealthy as it is dense. As the nations upon the Continent are at present situated and governed, they can have nothing that is worthy of being called a press, while the American States have their population too widely scattered, and are too much a people by themselves, for producing any thing of the kind that can develope the history of the rest of the world. Indeed, we have no evidence that an engine of this kind can exist

out of London,—at least that it can so exist upon the great scale; for though in various parts of provincial England there be papers which are very much upon the alert in all provincial matters, and which both select from the metropolitan journals with great skill and comment upon public measures with considerable ability, yet if these were deprived of all that they borrow from the Babylonian press, they would not be much better feathered than the daw after his creditors had forced him to make restitution.

Among the whole diurnal publications of the British metropolis, "THE TIMES" obviously deserves the first place,—a place so far before any of the others, that there is hardly any room, and therefore hardly any necessity, for a recal to it. In point of strength and of sagacity it is *Ganesa*, the Elephant; and, like the Elephant, its rapidity in a straight-forward course, is just as great as its determination to stand still when it so pleases itself, and its power to trample upon those by whom itself or its friends, and more especially its cause, is injured or insulted.

Various other Journals, both daily and weekly, are established either for the avowed or the desired purpose of defending the principles and conduct, and combating the enemies, of certain parties or classes of men in the country; but the foundation

upon which "The Times" rests is far more extensive and therefore far more secure. It is purely an English paper—a real John Bull; and it possesses all the good qualities and all the faults of John's character. Like John, its first care is that its business shall be better done than any body's else; like John, it is honest and blunt; like John, it is apt to treat with indifference, and even with scorn, every thing of which it does not perceive the use; like John, it speaks its mind freely; and though it be, like John, a great stickler for the principles and even the forms of the constitution, like him it is very apt to growl at the details.

The very circumstance of "The Times" having originated and being conducted without party connexion, and solely as a mercantile speculation—a speculation of the same kind which has raised so many men of England, and especially of Babylon, to the summit of opulence and usefulness, renders it, if not a better guide to the formation of public opinion, yet a more express image of that opinion as it is formed, than any other journal of the day. This is the most valuable quality that a newspaper can possess; and the example of "The Times" has proved that it is the one which conduces most to the profit of the proprietors. Some papers give themselves airs in consequence of their supposed connexion with the fashionable world, and presume

to be silly in one department, and careless in another, because they happen to chronicle the routs at the west end of the town, and give pictures of the new faces—I beg their pardon, the new feet, which waltz at Almack's. Other papers set the owl of Minerva upon the very top of their foreheads, and become so deeply learned upon all subjects, that nobody is able, or indeed disposed, to look to the bottom of them upon any. A third class, even when peace is declared among the leading men of political factions, and they are beating the spears of their angry warfare into pruning-hooks, for the purpose of lopping off the rotten branches of the tree of the commonwealth and trimming and invigorating the green ones, still keep thumping at the drum and squeaking at the fife, as if they expected hostilities forthwith to recommence. Others lay hold of a particular question, or rather a particular view or side of some question, and keep working at that, from blunder to blunder, and from nonsense to nonsense, throughout all the days in the Calendar. But none of these takes the same hold upon the British people, and especially upon the people of the British metropolis, that is taken by "The Times." To be convinced of this, one may, without comparing the spirit and manner of the papers, merely compare the number and the variety of real business adver-

tisements which "The Times" contains with those contained in any other paper. These cannot be obtained by private influence with any person or with any class, for they come alike from all classes, in proportion as they have to make their wants or their wishes known through the medium of a newspaper. The object of every one who advertises is that his advertisement should be seen by as many persons as possible; and the fact that "The Times" contains, upon an average, more than twice as many advertisements as any other paper, is a proof that it has at least twice as many readers. It is, indeed, the only paper in which this very useful department is reduced to any thing like a regular system. In most journals you find them jumbled together in the same confusion in which they are delivered at the office; and notices of "A Charity Sermon by the Bishop of Chester," "Important Advice to both Sexes," by an advertising quack, "The Book of the Church," by his Majesty's Poet Laureate, and "A Child's Caul to be sold for Twenty Guineas," by some old clothesman about Houndsditch,—may all be found hugging each other, as though, notwithstanding the impossibility of any thing like relationship, there were still some mystical principle of affinity which had drawn them together. In "The Times," on the other hand, if you wish for any particular kind of vendable

44734

commodity, or if you have any thing of which you wish to dispose, you know not merely the page, but the column, and the place of the column, in which to look for that which you want. Perhaps this arrangement—this making so many miscellaneous things to serve as their own index, may be one of the reasons why so many persons prefer "The Times" as an advertising paper; and though it be but a trifle in itself, it is exceedingly convenient, and saves a great deal of time.

Another great superiority of "The Times" is the earliness, and in general the accuracy, of its information. To insure this, it must have a very extensive agency in every part of the world; and indeed so conscious are the proprietors that saving in this respect would not be wise, that (as I have heard) they have been known to employ fast-sailing vessels of their own, and thereby out-run the Government packets by several hours. This earliness of information is not only highly gratifying to general readers as matter of curiosity, but it is essential to men in many departments of business—especially those who deal in foreign exchanges and foreign securities; and this, joined to its being firmly established as the great vehicle of advertising, secures for "The Times," if not an exclusive, at

least an overwhelming circulation, among the merchants and money-changers of the City.

A third advantage of "The Times" is the watchfulness that it exercises in excluding every thing which would be violently shocking either to decency or to humanity. The police reports in this paper have, in the metropolis and its vicinity at least, done more toward the detection, and therefore toward the prevention of crime, than has, perhaps, been done by any other means; but in those reports, "The Times" has never made crime itself a matter of amusement, or attempted, by clothing ruffians in the garb of ribaldry, to pass them off as stage buffoons rather than serious enemies of society. In disclosing the errors and frailties of mankind too, although "The Times" never attempts to conceal or to palliate their faults, it is not so merciless toward the erring and the offending as some other papers.

A fourth superiority of "The Times" is the selection which it makes in those tedious things—reports of legal cases. Perhaps this may be, in part, attributed to its not having the same space to devote to them; but certain it is, that, though every important new fact and new decision in law, especially in mercantile law, be carefully recorded in "The Times," yet one has not to wade to these through

such a mass of mere words, in its columns, as in the columns of some of its contemporaries.

These, and many others, are advantages which any person exercising common judgment without bias may find out; and there are some counteracting circumstances which are just as apparent. I am no advocate for the exposing of faults, both because mankind are adroit enough in the discovery of these without incitement and without guide, and because were I to preach such a doctrine, I should be preaching that which would fall with double weight upon myself in the practice; but I cannot help thinking, that as "The Times" resembles the elephant in its sagacity and its strength, as well as in its power of helping its friends and avenging itself upon its enemies, it should also resemble the elephant in keeping its indignation under the control of its judgment, and never allowing itself to be overtaken by those frantic barkings and jumpings, which display alike the wrath and the weakness of less sensible and substantial animals. When "The Times" reproves with calmness, there is great power in its reproof; and when it chastises, having the power of thought the while, no chastisement can be more effective—either for correction, where that can be effected, or for extinguishing and trampling down, where it cannot; but the moment that it allows itself to storm and call names,

it becomes an elephant with his tusks broken, his trunk paralysed, and his joints stiffened—a shorn Sampson, over whom even the feeblest of the Philistines may gain at least a momentary advantage.

Another sin of "The Times" is its utter want both of taste and of time in the matter of Balaam. I do not mean the false prophet who caused Jacob to sin and suffer womanward,—indeed, I have no allusion at all either to falsehood or to prophecy: but there is a certain ingredient entering into the composition of every newspaper, and almost every periodical journal—and not of these only, for it forms the principal part of many and many a book, without the learned author's being aware of its use, or even of its existence—which, for what reason I know not, is named, after the ass-admonished seer, *Balaam*. In books, this is generally an original commodity, and in many books it is the only thing that is original; but with the editors of periodical journals, and more especially with the editors of daily newspapers, it is the name of certain gleanings with which the paper is to be eked out, in case the news and advertisements of the day shall be too scanty for filling it completely. Those who are not overburdened with advertisements acquire considerable tact in the use of this balaam, and not only

keep it in very nice correspondence with the topics of the day, but sometimes, by concealing the sources whence it is derived, and altering a few words at the beginning and end of each paragraph, manage to give it so much the air of originality, that it very often passes current as their own. "The Times," however, does not need to beg, and scorns to appropriate; and as its conductors, from the press of advertisements and other matters, have not much experience in the use of balaam, they contrive, when they are obliged to resort to it, to select their articles so perfectly out of date, as that no man can help seeing that they are stuck in merely because nothing more important has occurred to fill the space which they occupy.—Another sin which occasionally besets "The Times" is strong prejudice upon sundry points both of politics and of taste. Those prejudices indeed have in general this in their favour—that they lean toward that sturdiness, if not perfect clearness of principle, which is found in every tendency and propensity that is wholly and absolutely English; and, for the sake of their better qualities, one may easily forgive them these. If, for instance, the people of any other nation give themselves airs, and lay claim to any thing superior to that of the same description which is found in England, "The Times" is not only apt to take

offence, but to betray that ignorance and indifference in respect of other nations which John Bull not only possesses, but boasts of. If, however, they be not interfered with, they have a good deal of the same blunt generosity which runs through the character of John Bull; and though it be altogether impossible to reason them out of their prejudices, and indeed useless to attempt it, they contrive, if you let them alone, to get rid of them themselves.

But the grand quality of "The Times" is its independence—the utter inability of any quack or impostor to make it appear as though the conductors of "The Times," from their own conviction, and in their own words, say what he wishes to be said of his nostrum, his project, or his production. It is true that their columns are open for advertisements, in any form that the advertiser sees meet, excepting, as I have heard, some of the more offensive and immoral species of quackery; but still the people of "The Times" take especial care that no opinion, right or wrong, excepting their own voluntary opinion, shall be made to appear as theirs. The advertiser may construct his puff as summarily as he pleases,—he may begin it with the words, "We have seen with pleasure," "We have heard with delight," or, "We have great satisfaction in being able to state;" and he may go on in the same strain in such a way, as that, without some mark

set upon his writing, even a very good judge would suppose that the editor of the paper were stating, out of sheer admiration, that, of the truth of which he was firmly convinced from his own personal knowledge. "The Times" receives all this, and prints it; but by printing the single word "*Advertisement*" at the top of it, they afford a key to the whole matter, and show the most simple and careless reader, that the opinion thus attempted to be palmed upon the public as theirs, is neither more nor less than a projector puffing his own project; and when a paragraph appears, proclaiming the great advantages which are to result from the establishment of a company, the inexpressible benefits that a nostrum or a cosmetic has conferred upon the world, the great talents of some candidate for public fame, the astonishing genius with which a book has been written, or any of the other marvellously good qualities which the necessity or the impudence of an advertising man sets forth, is by means of the magical commentary of this little word shown to be a piece of self-praise, then the effect is absolutely ridiculous. I have often been disappointed in pictures, and books, and other matters of a similar kind, to which I had seen the most extravagant praise given by the editors of papers, whom I had no reason to regard as fools; and repeated disappointment in this way has induced me, before I placed

confidence in any little leading paragraph that appeared in another paper, to look into "The Times," in order to see whether the same thing, or something analogous, was to be found there stamped a counterfeit, by having the same word "Advertisement" branded on its front.

This practice may, in the eyes of some, appear somewhat harsh toward the poor wight who concocts the paragraph and pays his money for its insertion; but it is a matter of great justice toward the public, and a most effectual means of keeping up the character of the paper, and giving weight to its decisions when it happens to decide upon the merits of any thing, in its own language. If you find any praise or censure in "The Times," which is not marked as an advertisement, you may always be sure that, right or wrong, that is the unbought opinion of the conductors of the paper, or of those to whom they delegate the management of the particular department to which the article judged of belongs. In this way, though the people of "The Times" may err, and no doubt do err, in their own judgment, they can never be supposed to mislead from those interested motives which necessarily influence those persons of whom the thing praised is the property, or who are in possession of something to which the thing censured is a rival.

In many other papers, when a criticism on a book, for instance, is given, you never know whether that criticism comes from the proprietor of the book as a paid advertisement, or from the editor of the paper as a piece of honest-intentioned criticism; but when such a thing appears in "The Times," without the mark as aforesaid, you can always be sure that they have examined the matter and question, and that what they say is the result of that examination. I am far from saying that they are infallible oracles,—that they may not sometimes praise a thing which is really bad, and at other times censure a thing which is really good; but still it is a great matter to have a court in which, though there must be human frailty, and it may be a little private favouritism, there can be no direct bribery and corruption.

In consequence of their greater supply of matter which yields them money, and their attention to the events of the time, the conductors of "The Times" have not much room for miscellaneous criticism: and this being the case, it may naturally be supposed, that there must be something which strikes them, at least, in that which they select; and this gives an additional value to their praise, as well as an additional severity to their censure. I know not, and I do not care very much, how others may feel upon such subjects: but if I were

any way anxious of that ephemeral praise which is to be gleaned from the columns of a worshipper, "The Times" would be the one from which I would most anxiously glean it; but if I were reduced to the necessity of applying for such a thing, "The Times" would be the very last paper to which I would apply,—and I would do this from a conviction, that if I said or did any thing that they saw meet to notice, they would notice it without any hint from me; but that if I attempted to give them such a hint, then I should be apprehensive, that "the more I asked them, the more they would not do it."

CHAPTER V.

THE PRESS γ.

"Now look through Fate! behold the scene she draws!
What aids, what armies, to assert her cause!
See all her progeny—illustrious sight!
Behold, and count them, as they rise to light.
As Berecynthia, while her offspring vie
In homage to the mother of the sky,
Surveys around her in the blest abode
A hundred sons, and every son a god:
Not with less glory mighty Dulness crown'd
Shall take, through *Babel*, her triumphant round,
And her Parnassus glancing o'er at once,
Behold a hundred sons, and each a dunce."

It is not only a singular fact, but a fact from which conclusions highly favourable to the good taste, discernment, and independence of the public may be drawn, that "The Times," the paper which obtains the largest and most lucrative share of public support, is almost the only one which is neither supported by any political party or single class of

persons, nor rests its claims upon the superiority with which any of its single departments is conducted, or the merits of any one individual engaged in the conducting of it.

The *Morning Herald* is, after "The Times," an independent, or perhaps I should rather say, a mercantile speculation of the proprietors; and, therefore, like every other mercantile speculation, it naturally looks for its support to the whole public, rather than to any one class. But it entirely wants the general taste and tact of "The Times;" and it owed the commencement, and owes the continuation of its success, more to the attention which it pays to the errors and crimes of society, and the turn which it has of converting those naturally repulsive subjects into matters of amusement, than to the earliness or the accuracy of its general information, or the soundness and depth of its political or critical opinions. Nobody, at least nobody with whom I ever spoke, either quoted his information from "The Herald," or appealed to it as a standard of opinion. One never finds it introduced by political men, as a matter of caution, like "The Times," or as a matter of praise or censure, like the party papers. One seldom hears its opinion appealed to as the test by which the professors or productions of the fine arts are to be judged,—

and one very seldom finds its words quoted in booksellers' advertisements. One cause of its not being referred to upon these latter subjects, may be, that by imitating "The Times" in putting the word "Advertisement" at the top of those paragraphs which are manufactured for the purpose of quotation, it prevents the possibility of quoting those expressions which it would be most agreeable for the parties to quote: but there is a more substantial reason; when "The Herald" does venture to give an opinion upon a literary subject, or a subject connected with the finer principles and more skilful practice of the arts, it contrives to show, that that is so much a matter without the pale of its ordinary occupations and congenial feelings, that it is unable to say much that is worthy of being quoted. It, in short, betrays a want of knowledge and a want of love of such subjects, which take away the merits of its praise, and blunt the sting of its censure; so that a man who aims at any thing higher than the broad amusement of the public for the passing hour, is apt to be indifferent as to what may be written about him in "The Herald."

Still, however, though not an instructing, "The Herald" is, as times go, and the tastes of men (unfortunately perhaps) lean, a very amusing publication withal; and there are, both in the Babylon

and elsewhere, thousands of persons who, I doubt not, would be very willing to sacrifice all the philosophy, all the patriotism, all the learning, and all the taste, provided that thereby they could secure a continuation of that broad humour, that making merry at faults and failings—that dressing up of ignorance and vice, as motley harlequins and facetious clowns, which is afforded to them by "The Herald." And it must be admitted, that if one could bring oneself to believe that nightly brawls in the streets, and squabbles in the watchhouses, and scenes in the police-offices, were the fittest subjects about which to make merry, then "The Herald" would be a very clever, and deserve to be a very popular, journal. That the thoughtless —those who are bent upon what they call fun, and who care not what degradation or misery that fun may produce to others, should like the court colloquies, the ludicrous groups, and the singular actions, which "The Herald" sets before them, can easily be imagined; nor will it be denied, that, amid the mass of that which fastidious persons would call offensive matter, there are often delineations so droll, so graphic, so perfectly Hogarthian both in the outlines and the filling up, that they overcome the powers of the most grave and philosophic face, and even bespeak a patient, if not a favourable reading, for other delineations, which,

without the others, would be scorned and scouted, because of their unmingled offensiveness.

Although I am far from being of opinion (though to be sure my opinion is not worth much, and so I am asking nothing for it), that the subject upon which "The Herald" avowedly rests its principal hopes of success, is either the most honourable in its nature, or the most beneficial in its effects upon the morals or the taste of society, I am very ready to admit not only that its execution is admirable, but that it may occasionally do good. When, indeed, one observes the power of fancy, the tact in observation, and the ready hand at delineating, which appear in the police reports of "The Herald," one cannot help regretting, that the labours of so very eminent a workman as they must employ in this department, must perish through the perishableness of his materials. Were he to take a range somewhat wider, dip his figures when made in the philosophic waters, to give them long, if not immortal duration, and so group them together as to represent the general habits of classes, instead of the insulated acts of individuals, such a man might become in effect, what, candidly speaking, he seems to be in power—a sort of literary Hogarth, and do for the lower and lost classes of society, what many, with powers far inferior, attempt to do for the upper and aspiring.

One is the more disposed to regret, that such an artist should trace his figures in the sand, and so have to trace other ones after the return of every tide, when one perceives that his talents are not, like some of those who attempt to be droll after the same fashion, confined to the ludicrous appearances and expressions of any one class of persons.

There are some who can hit off the oddities of Babylon with great effect, (as for instance one or both authors of the "Rejected Addresses,") there are others who can be very graphic in setting forth the Fives' Court and the ring, and there is a third class, who know the very depths of debauchery, and can throw a clear light upon the darkest pages in the history of human transaction; but when any, or when all of these, attempt to step beyond their vocation, the drollery shifts from the thing described to the describer—the world ceases to laugh at the incongruities of the subject, although they may still be unable to maintain the gravity of their muscles, in consequence of the incongruity that there is between the subject and the delineation. I have heard a story told of a painter who had arrived at considerable celebrity, in consequence of the great effect with which he delineated the ass,—an animal which, though it has great favour for,

and perhaps considerable relationship to, many other classes of learned, eloquent, and elegant persons, is a favourite with none but with the painter. I will not go into the philosophy of the matter, as to whether this picturesque and patient quadruped is scorned by poets, by prosers like myself, and by quill-men in general, upon the same grounds and for the same reasons that men attempting to rise in the world always shun their poor, humble, and contented relatives: I will not enter upon this piece of philosophy; but I cannot help thinking that it is a very promising one, and really many of the knots of wise heads in Babylon the Great, not excepting those wisest of them all, the Royal Societies of Arts and of Literature, appear to me to have sometimes busied themself about matters not much more elevated in the study, and which did not promise, and I may say did not prove, more useful in the solution. To them, therefore, I leave the philosophy, making my leg with all manner of submissive admiration, and proceed to state the fact. This painter, who, as I have said, had gotten much renown in consequence of the great accuracy with which he could imitate an ass, was not contented with the glory thence resulting, but would needs delineate landscapes and groups of human figures: but so strongly had the ass taken hold of his imagination—so completely had it usurped dominion

over him, that whatever was the subject of his picture, and whatever it appeared to be like upon a very near inspection, when removed to a proper distance you would always trace in it a very distinct image of the donkey,—some two great men, great women, great castles, or great trees, were always perked up in one place like the ears, and so on through all the other members of that which the artist would have avoided if he could.

It is just the same with those delineators of drollery of whom I speak. They do the ass well; but they should content themselves with it; for of a surety it is apparent in every thing they attempt, whether they do intend it or not. It is the absence of this, not mannerism, but individuality of conception, which constitutes the great charm of the police reporter for "The Herald;" and therefore his case is exactly the reverse of that of the painter, seeing that he must always stick to the ass, whether his forte happen to lie there or not.

I have heard it objected against "The Herald," and against other papers, which either generally, or upon particular subjects, write, or attempt to write, after the same fashion, that by so writing they give a sort of *éclat* to crimes, and thereby entice people to the commission of them. This may be a very virtuous opinion; but like many other opinions which flow, or are intended to flow, from an exu-

berance of virtuous feeling, it is not excessively wise. That the style in which the faults and the follies of society are delineated in "The Herald," may make folks better acquainted, not only with the fact that such things are committed, but with the manner in which they are committed, I do not deny; but I have yet to learn, and I suspect that the rest of the world has yet to learn, that the making of any thing notorious, provided that it be at the same time made ridiculous, tempts men to the commission of it. On the contrary, the very circumstance of making police reports—things which have something repulsive in their very nature—palatable and sought after, is one step, and a very decided step, toward the prevention of the matters they turn into ridicule. It may be possible that a few fools may do silly things from the vanity of seeing themselves in print, but the number even of them must be very few; while knaves will never do knavish things, from a desire of having them known. In as far, therefore, as the prevention of crime is concerned, the case in favour of the police reports is decided.

But they have another advantage: they are powerful auxiliaries in the detection of whatever of evil has been done. In a place like London, the most extensive, honest, and lynx-eyed police cannot be wholly sufficient for tracing the ramifications

of iniquity. There are pieces of information to be obtained from individuals with whom the police cannot have any intercourse, but which may be, and often have been, brought to light by the mere publication of other crimes committed by the same parties in the newspapers; and if the police magistrates were to be examined upon the point, I have no doubt that they would admit, that since the press paid so much attention to the matter, their labours have been more efficient.

There is yet one farther advantage of this species of publication, and that is, the effect which it has upon the police themselves. This has some happy effects, as it regards their Honours upon the benches; but it has many more as it regards those whom they must employ in the inferior department. A magistrate, who knows that a million of persons will read every word he says, and decide upon every judgment he gives, within a few hours after it is delivered, must be upon the alert; and when the officers employed know that so vigilant a watchman has his eye upon them, they will pause before they enter into those collusions, which, in former times, were so common as to be the foundation of proverbs. The general improvements of the age may have done a good deal towards bringing the police of London to its present state of efficiency and comparative purity; but I am disposed

to think, that the rendering of police reports an object of general interest and curiosity has done a good deal more.

That by this means wounds may be given, and very often are actually given, to the feelings of individuals who ought not to have their feelings so wounded, cannot be denied; and that there have been cases in which "The Herald" has been very reprehensible in this way, is equally true; but there is no need at this time of day for mentioning that the casual abuses which may take place in the exercise of any function, are no argument against its general utility. That which is calculated to effect great good, must always be of an active nature, and for that reason dangerous when it gets into the hands of the ignorant or the heedless; and, just as is the case with those who pervert religion, and medicine, and liberty, and wealth, and all other great and valuable things to mischievous purposes, the ignorant or injudicious uses to which police reporting has been prostituted, are no argument against the thing applied—they merely affect the mode of its application, and perhaps in it they have done far less injury to the feelings of individuals, compared with the great good that has resulted to society generally, than has occurred in the exercise of any power of the same extent, and the same activity.

The Morning Chronicle once stood at the head of what may be considered as party journals, and in some respects it then stood at the head of the whole daily press. The late Mr. Perry, to whom it owed its rise, and whose death brought about its sinking, if not its fall, belonged to a class of persons who cannot be looked for among the every-day proprietors and editors of newspapers; and, therefore, the celebrity of "The Morning Chronicle" being all along more dependant upon him, as an individual, than upon any superiority in the other departments of its management, naturally became weak when his strength was withdrawn from it. Mr. Perry possessed, in no inferior degree, the attributes of politician, man of the world, and man of taste; and if he was not just so profound as a philosopher, or as a critic, as the world was disposed to give him credit for being, they gave him the credit, and that answered the purpose equally well. During his lifetime, "The Chronicle" was not only by common report the Whig paper, but the editor and proprietor himself was admitted a party in the concocting of most of the Whig plans, and bore his share in every effort that was made for the carrying of those plans into execution. In those days, the Whigs were not only a more popular, but a more powerful, united, and gifted party than they are

in these latter times; and, from those circumstances, their accredited organ, which always played in dignified strains, commanded much more respect than any similar organ could now command.

In addition to his political superiority, Mr. Perry had, and probably deserved, the character of a kind of *arbiter elegantiarum;* and in virtue of this character, his account of the motives and movements of the fashionable world were counted so superior to those of any other editor, that his paper was sought after, for its fashionable intelligence, by many who were hostile to its politics. Besides, he had the skill to select the best artists, both as servants and as amateurs; and in consequence of this "The Morning Chronicle," in its better days, was certainly the most brilliant paper of that time, and perhaps superior to any thing that has been since introduced. There was a spirit in its poetry, a smartness in its anecdotes, and a gentlemanly air even in the severest of its strictures, together with a careful avoiding of all details and circumstances by which delicacy could be materially offended, that rendered it better adapted for being the newspaper of the polite world, than any of its contemporaries.

But the death of Mr. Perry, the decline of the Whig party, the total dissolution of all connexion

—at least of all avowed connexion, between the remains of that party and the paper, its passing into other and very different hands, and the attempts that appear to have been made to bring it into competition with the common mercantile and hot-house journals, have completely destroyed the former character of "The Chronicle," without giving it any thing that can be called a character in return. At present it is probably the most laborious of all the Babylonian journals; and yet it, perhaps, labours to less purpose than any of them. In its reports, it grasps at every thing, good, indifferent, and bad; and it seems to be watchful enough after news; but there is such a total want of discrimination and taste, and, above all, of life and spirit about it, that its labours do not turn to half the account of those of others who are not half so laborious.

In addition to those wants of "The Chronicle," it has some qualities which it would be a great deal better without:—Upon many points of politics and political economy, it is by far too much the doating and dogmatical disciple of theories and principles which no sensible man can hold, and no man of very delicate mind would wish to be brought into practice. I shall not mention all its erroneous, or rather offensive frailties upon such points, but I may mention that "The Chronicle" either is labour-

ing, or was not very long ago labouring at two of the most hopeless, and to all men of good taste and right feeling, two of the most revolting projects that ever accidentally took possession of the human head when they found it "To be let unfurnished," —the elevation of profligate infidelity into the place which religion occupies, and the substitution of the dregs of French vice for the good old purity of English domestic society. I know not why I should conceal the parties for whom "The Chronicle," at least at one time laboured—they were Richard Carlile, and a *soi-disant* philosopher, whose place is some where westward of Temple Bar; the one of whom laboured (and perhaps did it through terror of starvation, which was at least some extenuation of his labour) to set men altogether free from the restraints of religion, and the other laboured (and if he did it without any necessity of pecuniary reward, that was no extenuation of his labour) to introduce among the most heedless and most helpless class of his fellow-subjects, notions which would have gone far to subvert not merely the moral principles, but the natural feelings, of a large proportion of the poorer classes.

There was no possibility for any journals wading through such sloughs as these, without being both soiled and encumbered by the stains; and though I am far from supposing that "The Chronicle" was

not thinking that it was in good earnest promoting the weal of mankind when it was working at these matters, yet even "The Chronicle" itself does not need to be told, that, in a public journalist, ignorance of this kind is just as mischievous in its effects as if the same conduct sprung from known and perverse wickedness.

In addition to those circumstances, "The Chronicle" is beset by a species of poking and perverse obscurity,—a faculty, in consequence of which it is continually labouring to render dark subjects which are naturally plain enough, and to persuade people that there is great depth in the shallowest of all possible matters. There is still a good deal both of learning and of power about it; but the learning is of that kind which the age either never has learned, or has been at some pains to forget; and the power is so perfectly unmanageable, or rather so unskilfully managed, that it turns to very little account. It often presents the most singular combinations: The beginning of a paragraph shall be religious, even to downright puritanicism, whilst the end shall be an innuendo, and not a very dark one, that it would just be as well for the world if there were no religion at all;—it shall begin with a panegyric upon the glorious Revolution of 1688, and of the great blessings that have resulted to these kingdoms from the overthrow of the Romish

hierarchy, and it shall end by a piece of special pleading, neither very temperate nor very logical, in favour of the restoration of that same hierarchy to a large portion of its temporal power, and an admission of the genuine followers of Loyola to the management of state affairs in England. It contains, in short, a great deal of the empty husks of knowledge, and the dry stubble of theoretic philosophy; but it seems not to understand, and, indeed, it is not easy to see how it should understand, how to turn these matters to any effective practical account.

But, independently of any inferiority on the part of those by whom "The Chronicle" has been new modelled, and changed from a party paper of the first class and most decided spirit, to a general paper, certainly not the first of its class; and, whatever may be its industry, the very fact of changing it so completely, was in itself an act of a somewhat hazardous nature. It is true that they, into whose hands it is come, were not calculated to occupy the same relation in which Mr. Perry stood with regard to the Whigs, and the Whigs themselves do not appear so solicitous to have the direct co-operation of a single paper as they once were; but all things considered, it might have been just as well to preserve not only the semblance of a connexion with the Whigs, but the

whole of that tone of the paper, which would have prevented folks from seeing that men of high rank and lofty pretensions had ceased to be intimately connected with it. This, indeed, was the only unoccupied ground—the only ground upon which it had not to contend against a well-established competitor; unless, indeed, it had plunged head and ears into high Church and high Tory politics,—a change which would have been a great deal too violent, and which, judging from the only Morning paper which takes that course violently, would not have been very advantageous. For early and general information, and as a vehicle for advertisements, "The Chronicle" had to contend, and to contend hopelessly, with "The Times," while each of the other Morning papers barred it out from some department or other; and thus, whatever might have been its strength, and the skill with which that strength was directed, its success must have been a matter both of difficulty and of time. Even its own friends appear to have given it at least tacit hints of the course which it ought to pursue: for, though it be not now a literary paper, the booksellers still continue to advertise very extensively in it; and though it does not pay more frequent or more skilful attention to works of art and subjects of elegant amusement than the other papers of the day, yet they who deal in those

things continue to show either a partiality to it from habit, or a gratitude for its past services.

I have often heard "The Chronicle" complained of, upon the ground that folks are unable to determine whether the opinions which it does state upon commercial subjects, and literature, and the arts, be its own opinions or disguised advertisements; and I must confess, that if some things which I have observed in it do not belong to the category of puffs, and if money has not been paid for their insertion, there is somebody connected with the paper, who will never discover the philosopher's stone either in a mercantile or a metaphysical sense. One who remembers what "The Chronicle" was in former times, cannot help regretting being obliged to speak of it after this fashion; but when one sits down honestly and conscientiously to describe things, one must describe things just as one finds them, and sacrifice even private feelings to regard for truth.

The Morning Post may be regarded as being partly a party paper and partly not. It has all along been upon the ministerial side, and it has been so violently or mildly in proportion to the temperature of its editors. It is not to be accounted as a strong paper any way. It affects to be fashionable; and, like the majority of well-behaved people of fashion, it is too polite for doing

either much good or much harm. It is, however, very genteel in its manners; and never gets out of temper either with itself or with any body else. It is respectable in its information, but it is never first-rate; and though its opinions be always candid, and often kind, they are seldom expressed with sufficient strength. There is not a great deal either of depth or of substance in its political speculations; and though in literature and in life it has some knowledge, and some love of what is soft and pretty, it does not appear to understand or to trouble itself about what is sublime or energetic. "The Post" has that listless kind of eye which belongs to an elegant lounger, or a lady who is quite contented to rest the whole of her fame upon being fashionable; it cannot see things that are very large, neither can it see those of which the point is very small and keen. But the same qualities which render "The Post" comparatively a feeble paper, render it safe to all and agreeable to many: it never tears and destroys private character, like some of its more daring brethren; and I, at least, have never heard of its exerting itself to stifle the fame or ruin the prospects of any candidate for public notice. "The Post" appears to be quite at home and happy, in its own fine writing—which is not always very fine, and in its own poetry—which is not always very poetical. In consequence of this

unassuming mildness of character, "The Post" differs from most of the other papers; for while the real value of their opinions is never above par, and frequently at a discount, that of "The Post" usually circulates at a premium.

The New Times is a journal which takes the same side in politics that "The Post" takes, when its gentleness enables it to take a side at all: but "The New Times" is a paper of a very different description; it is decidedly, and one would almost say furiously, a party paper. Its original name was "The Day;" and since, in consequence of the secession or expulsion of its present, or at any rate its late, editor from "The Times," it has been called "The time-o'-day,"—a word of most emphatic import in the Babylonian slang vocabulary. Setting aside the politics of "The New Times"—and while the government of the country is upon a peace and prosperity establishment, the violent part of the politics, not only of "The New Times," but of every other paper, will be set aside, whether they who drudge therein be so disposed or not—the said "New Times" is what one would call a fair and civil journal; but it is in the habit of being very slovenly withal, and neither selects information, nor states proceedings, with that discrimination and tact which characterise the journal of which it professes to be a new edition. Sometimes,

too, and the times at which it has attempted this are rather recent than remote, it has opened a vein of what it has been pleased to call original humour; but that humour has proved to be either so *peccant*, or so perfectly insipid, that they have allowed the vein to close again. Indeed, no time could be worse chosen for the commencement of a species of writing which had nothing to recommend it but its ill-nature, and not enough of that to make an effective recommendation, than that at which "The New Times" began to deal in this sort of commodity. Come from whichever side of a question it will, there is nothing in which the right of primogeniture is more strong than in the calling of names; and had "The New Times" been the first to do this, there is little doubt that, if it had not become celebrated, it would have become abundantly notorious. But while there was room left for such a thing, and patience in the public to hear it, "The New Times" was demonstrating its indignation, and denouncing its vengeance, against those whom it did not like, in very solemn though somewhat sickly strains; and the change from these to ribaldry, even though that ribaldry had been fresh and new, would, in all probability, have been too much for its constitution. It used to be a sort of lecturing and lamenting paper; and even where it did not find conviction, (for it never was remarkable for

carrying conviction with it,) it moved pity; and that which is at one time successful in exciting the compassion of mankind, is not the most promising for exciting their laughter at another. When it took to its solemn lamentations, nobody was probably very much alarmed for the actual coming of the evils which it foresaw; but there were many who would have been very sorry had those evils actually come, and there were not a few who regretted that a paper laying claim to so much kindness of heart, and purity of principle, should be afflicted with the anticipation of them. Those dangers, or rather those phantasma of danger, have, however, passed away; and the country and "The New Times" have great reason to be thankful that they have preserved their existence—or rather, perhaps, that their safety has been preserved in a way which, perhaps, neither of them exactly understands. In matters of taste and literature, "The New Times" has all along been accounted more honest than intelligent; and those who have withheld from its decisions on these points the praise of absolute wisdom, have generally conceded to them that of very gentlemanlike impartiality. But this has not been uniform; for there have been occasions upon which, without displaying one jot more either of depth or power than usual, it has run quite wild: yet as it

generally remained but a short time in those fits, and as nobody seemed to be seriously hurt by its conduct while in them, it would not be fair to put them upon record against it.

It has always struck me that *The British Press* is a paper, and perhaps the only Morning paper, that has neither been honoured nor rewarded in proportion to its merits. This may seem singular; for the name, though there be a little of arrogance in it, is notwithstanding one of the very best names that could be thought of; and though there has often been a good deal of meagreness in the reporting department of "The Press," yet it has frequently been in other respects managed with great spirit, if not the most perfect judgment. "The Press" has passed through many hands; and, in consequence, there is no uniformity in its political opinions. Perhaps, indeed, this is the cause of its want of success; for if upon a political question, one asks what are the sentiments of "The British Press," one is obliged to pause and answer the previous question, "Under which King, Bezonian?" Whether this be the cause or not, it is true, that more brilliant if not profound original writing has, during the last four or five years, been buried in "The British Press," than in any other paper; and when one contrasts its merits upon many points, with its want of circulation and success in a com-

mercial point of view, one feels that something more than commercial talent is requisite for the firm establishment of a Morning paper. Unless, indeed, the original proprietors of such a paper be prepared to expend upon it a very large capital, it cannot have even a chance of success. In that which constitutes the permanent value of such a paper, no talent will suffice. Labour—the labour of many hands, and those hands as skilful and as numerous as any rival can employ, is the thing that is demanded; and unless this can be procured —unless foreign news as early and as abundant, and reports as full and as faithful, as are to be found in any rival journal, can be obtained, all the generous opinions, all the just criticism, and all the honesty, fairness, and liberality, which the conductors of a paper can impart to it, seem to be utterly incompetent for recommending it to the public. This is to be regretted as a general misfortune, and it is especially to be regretted in the case of "The British Press;" but as it is one of those subjects of regret of which the blame can be laid upon no individual, it does not appear that there is either removal or remedy.

"The British Press" explains another fact which may be useful to those who shall attempt the establishment of Morning papers, and which is curious, and it may be consolatory, to the public at large.—

It is this: a limited body of men, whose business it is to advertise largely, and who might therefore be supposed to render the other parts of the paper subservient to their own purposes as advertisers, do not seem capable of establishing such a paper. "The British Press" belongs, or at least at one time belonged (for it shifts very often), in a great measure, to auctioneers—persons who advertise largely, but who do not appear to have been able, even with a reputed increase of talent in the immediate management, to add to the success of this paper. The experiment has therefore been tried; and the public may rest assured that, so great is the expense necessary for the establishment of a powerful Morning newspaper, and so various and uncontrollable are the circumstances upon which the success of such a publication depends, that no limited, and therefore interested, body of men can make it an engine for the forwarding of their private and personal advantage, in any other than by the legitimate road to preference in the public estimation—making it better than any of its rivals.

There are only other two Morning papers set forth in the Great Babylon; and the one of these is the property of rather a numerous class of persons, while the other is devoted to the interests of another class, as numerous, and, in a national point of view, far more important: *The Morning Adver-*

tiser is the property of the publicans, or, as they term themselves, "The Society of Licensed Victuallers;" and *The Public Ledger* is devoted to the shipping and commercial interests. Both of these papers being certain of a considerable circulation—a circulation as wide as the originating or patronizing class will admit of, without the exertion of any very great degree of talent or the putting of themselves to any very great expense, have learned to take matters in so snug and quiet a way, that in their quantity of matter, and also in the quality of it, they are considerably different from the other Morning papers. "The Advertiser" is seldom seen or heard of out of London; it is not met with in London, except in the houses of those from whose fraternity it emanates; and though all or most of them take it by way of encouraging a project belonging to their craft, there are few of them who do not find it expedient to order one or more of the other Morning papers. When Parliament is not sitting, and when no other matter of great public interest is in progress, "The Advertiser" rises up to a sort of resemblance to the other papers, or rather perhaps the other papers sink down to a sort of resemblance to "The Advertiser;" but during the sitting of Parliament, and indeed during the occurrence of any thing, an account of which can be acquired only through great labour and at great

expense, it would be in vain to look, at least, for an early or a full account of it, in "The Advertiser." In its Parliamentary reports, indeed, it has a very summary way of going to work; for however long or however loudly the members may debate at a certain hour, and that by no means a late one, "The Advertiser" condenses the whole of the eloquence into the single line, "An interesting debate ensued, in which (such and such members) took part;" and thereupon it adjourns the House.

The Ledger, instead of being, like "The Advertiser," confined in its circulation to the metropolis, and in a great measure restricted to a class who have not only the opportunity, but the necessity, of seeing the other journals, circulates among those connected with shipping at the out-ports, as well as in the capital; and therefore it demands a little more variety in its materials, and a little more care in the selection of them. Besides, there are subjects, and occasionally not the most obvious or manageable subjects, upon which it must state opinions; and thus, though the task of "The Ledger" be not so severe as that of the more general Morning papers, it is one of the labours of Hercules, compared with what devolves upon "The Advertiser."

Each of those papers seems, however, to answer the purpose for which it is intended, and to work away in a quiet and peaceable manner; but as nei-

ther of them has a first-rate influence upon public opinion, or is a first-rate vehicle of public opinion, either in London or any where else, I may close my remarks on them, and with them conclude my notice of the Morning papers.

I believe I mentioned already that an Evening newspaper is by no means so arduous, so original, or so expensive as a Morning one; because it can add to the news contained in the latter only a few occurrences that take place during the early part of the day. But though upon this account, as well as on account of the Babylonians being chiefly engaged in business or in pleasure at the time of their appearance, the Evening papers have a comparatively limited circulation in town, they have a corresponding greater one in the country. Country readers receive them by the same conveyance that brings the Morning ones; and as they have not only time to carry the news of town down to about two or three o'clock, but also leisure to comment at greater length upon the subjects contained in the Morning papers, they suit better for those who depend upon the journals of the day for their reasonings as well as for their facts. On this account, the Evening papers are perhaps more violent and decided in their politics than the Morning ones; and it is somewhat curious, that those of them which are the best supported, both in

circulation and in advertisements, are of different politics from the best-supported Morning papers.

I have heard this explained upon the supposition that the people in the country are a great deal more loyal—a great deal more devoted to the Ministry for the time being, than they of the Babylon; and I am disposed to admit that official men in the provinces have exalted notions, both of their own importance in the State and of the sense that Ministers have of that importance, which could not exist in London. He who is the chief man in some little corner, who looks down upon a score of villagers, or a few scores of burgesses, as the subjects of his demi-kingship, very naturally feels towards the King as a humble relative feels toward one who is high; whereas in London, the most lofty and assuming man in office soon finds out that his chief value in the estimation of the Minister consists in his living peaceably, and duly paying his taxes. Instead, therefore, of there being more of the reality of attachment to the Government in the country than in London, the quantity that is there merely looks larger in consequence of the smallness of other things.

But there is another cause why provincial men should give a preference to Ministerial journals: a very considerable number of the provincials have

got it into their heads that newspapers are grand instruments in the hands of political parties; that those papers which defend the measures of Government and attack with violence other papers which do not defend the measures of Government, are not only in the confidence and pay of the Administration, but that articles are regularly written for them by its most eminent members. When, therefore, the loyal parson, or headborough, or deputy lieutenant, or member of the quorum; in a remote place or district, gets hold of a paper which puts itself into a fury against something which has appeared in a journal that he imagines to be in the keeping of the Whigs or Radicals, he instantly sets down the vapouring of the newspaper, not only as the opinion, but as the production, of the Lord Chancellor, the First Lord of the Treasury, or one or other of the principal Secretaries of State; and doing this, he not only looks upon the paper as being an oracle of truth, but an oracle of the gods of his political worship, and he seeks after and reverences it accordingly. Those who are on the spot, and know how different the occupations of Ministers are from the writing of newspaper paragraphs, and how different the majority, if not the whole, of those by whom these paragraphs are written, are from the confidential associates of Ministers, need not to be told that this is a

delusion: but a delusion, while it lasts, seems to take a stronger hold upon the minds of men, than the truth does; and as this is rather a flattering delusion, they who are under it have no desire that it should be removed, while the newspaper-men, feeling that it gives them importance, and brings them profits, are at some pains to keep it up.

In consequence of its supposed connexion with Ministers, and its consequent extensive circulation, *The Courier* may be placed at the head of the Evening papers. In political matters "The Courier" is more noisy than wise; and therefore I should suppose that Ministers, instead of giving it assistance in its labours, or payment for them, do not, in many instances, deem it worthy of the small *honorarium* of their thanks,—if, indeed, which is by no means certain, they know of the great trouble to which it appears to put itself on their account. In the evenings, Ministers are generally far more usefully or far more agreeably employed than in reading newspapers, and when they do read those publications, I am inclined to think that they follow the general Babylonian practice of reading the Morning ones. I have learned, from what I think very good authority, that, notwithstanding the violent opposition of its politics, and the equally violent, very often unmerited, and not seldom unmanly and unmannerly, attacks which it has been

in the habit of making on him personally, Lord Eldon was till very lately, and is perhaps still, in the habit of reading no other paper than "The Morning Chronicle." I have heard it said, again and again, that "The Courier," and some other journals that follow in the tract of "The Courier," are in the habit of getting money for their politics; and I agree that they do so get money: but they do not get one shilling from the Treasury, or from any person immediately connected with or authorized by the Treasury;—they get it, however, from loyal persons throughout the country, who both believe in and admire such a connexion as this; and that answers the purpose just as well, or indeed better, inasmuch as the money thus procured comes from a number of persons in small sums, and in the regular way of business—which renders it far more secure, and certainly not less honourable, than if it were obtained in the other way. Indeed, of all those newspapers which take a violent part in politics, I am not sure that there is a single proprietor, editor, or writer, who, farther than the profits of his scheme as a mercantile speculation, either knows or cares very much about the principles of the party whose championship he assumes.

Besides the demand that there is for it in embueing the small politicians of the provinces with the

gift of tongues—in enabling the chronicler of the hamlet to be eloquent over his pot, and the vicar of the village to be wise in accompaniment to his pipe—in furnishing unintroduced ladies and gentlemen in the pump-room or library of a watering-place, with hammers wherewithal to break the ice of that bashfulness and forbearance for which such places, and they who resort thither, are so remarkable—in being, as it were, not only "all things to all men," but many things to many women—ministering as well to the internal stores as to the external curling of the most fine, fair, and fascinating of all heads,—there is a sort of Babylonian demand for a greater quantity of argumentation in supplement to the facts, in an Evening paper than in a Morning one; and, coupled with this demand and with the time at which it is made, there may also be found a part of the reason why the most successful papers of the evening take the opposite side in politics to the most successful papers in the morning. The Morning paper comes upon John Bull along with his muffin or his crust when he sits down to breakfast—the meal which he is said least to relish, and when he is cudgelling his brains about the business of the day: it therefore comes upon him when he has neither time nor turn for argument, and when his importance in his own eyes, and consequently his disregard of all else, is

a maximum. The Evening paper, on the other hand, pays its addresses to him when he has been fed and is at his ease—when he has retired to his club-room or his coffee-house, for the purpose of enjoying a portion, at least, of the fruits of that harvest which, during the long morning, it has been his business to reap. In such a state of mind—perhaps it would be more correct to say, in such a state of body—he seeks amusement rather than information; and as words are much more light and manageable than things, he probably gives the sayings of the Evening paper a preference to the recordings of the morning one; and as men are very apt to be loyal or not loyal, in proportion as they find themselves comfortable or not comfortable at the moment, it is extremely probable that John's politics may be somewhat different when John is full and lolling at his ease, than when John is empty and turmoiling himself at business. At all events, there must be some reason for John's preference for the independent "Times" in the morning, and the courtly "Courier" in the evening; and they who feel disposed to dispute that my theory is not the right one, are very welcome to publish a better.

Setting aside its politics altogether, "The Courier" is perhaps the best of the Evening papers, in a general point of view; and, except in details of some

parts of the proceedings of the day, it perhaps adds more to the information contained in the Morning papers than any of the other. In copying from those papers, I have, however, heard a charge brought against it: I have heard it said, that, in order to make the tone of a parliamentary report accord better with the tone of its own politics, it occasionally not only cuts down the best speeches, and omits the best arguments of some of the Opposition members, but leaves out, on the part of its favourites, whatever it conceives to be too specific an admission or too candid an avowal. I have mentioned again and again, and I cannot mention it too often, that Mr. Canning is one of the most candid ministers that ever assisted in the councils of England; and I have some sort of recollection of an instance in which a dispute took place between "The Times" and "The Courier," as to the meaning of his words, which was decided in favour of "The Times," by an appeal to that gentleman himself. The report in "The Times" bore that ministers had abandoned a certain opinion, after having for a short time entertained it; and the report in "The Courier" made it appear that ministers had never entertained such an opinion at all. The words in "The Times" were qualified by, "at least for any length of time," or something to the same meaning; and this qualifying clause "The Courier"

left out, and therefore gave to Mr. Canning's statement a meaning altogether different,—and a meaning which, when appealed to, he at once declared not to be the right one. This fact is in itself of no great importance; but it shows how necessary it is to keep the commentaries of a newspaper from mutilating the facts: and I have heard, that since this little disclosure, not only "The Courier," but some of the other papers, have learned to be much more circumspect than they were previously.

The Globe and Traveller is by many considered as the rival of "The Courier," and certainly there is a great difference both between the politics and the practices of the two journals. Amid all its vehemence, and its decided leaning, "The Courier" is, out of the lines of its peculiar prejudices, a light, lively, and good-natured paper,—more remarkable for a wool-gathering sort of humour, than for any thing digging to the depth or glooming in the gravity of any thing philosophic. "The Globe and Traveller," on the other hand, affects to be as solid as the one part of its title, and as *recherché*, and as well-licensed, it may be, for vending the marvellous, as the other half of the same. In its details "The Globe and Traveller" is pretty good; but it has the ponderosity, and the gravitation toward its own centre, which constitute a globe, and keep it in its form; and the tra-

veller who inditeth its speculations, cometh from a far country—a country so remote from common men and common notions, that few can tell whether he sayeth sooth there anent or not The streams of philosophy are like the streams of rivers: if they be too much exposed to the sun, men are apt to discover their shallowness at some seasons, and apprehend danger from their overflow at others; and if they run too deep, they may, like the rivers of Southern Africa, cease to have a fertilizing effect, and become lost both to sight and to utility. The philosophy of "The Globe and Traveller" is somewhat in this latter predicament. By the look of the paper you can perceive, or at least presume, that there is a world—a globe of wisdom in it; but in what that wisdom consists, where it lies, how it operates, or what purpose it serves, I, at least, have never been able to find out. I have seldom seen more massy and more sensible-looking paragraphs, or disquisitions which seemed to have more of that solid quality which enables those who use it to sink deep among things and their causes; but when I began to seek for it, in order that I might know what it was about, and admire its operation, I always in the end found myself regretting that it had fallen sheer through the bottom, and was lost.

It is possible that my disappointment in this respect may be my own fault: but admitting that it

is, I do not see that a sufficient case in favour of the use of this ultra-profundity has been made out; because those who affect to write for all the world, should not show themselves so much wiser than the rest of the world, as that plain men cannot understand their mode of proceeding in the enunciation of ordinary opinions and the elucidation of every-day events. Even in the least profound of political questions, there is enough for common men to grapple with, without compelling them to grapple through the mists of an occult philosophy.

"The Globe and Traveller" has the character of being a very liberal and independent paper—of not taking a very violent part either for or against any of the confessed and acknowledged sets of politicians; and, in as far as I am able to judge of it, I have no great disposition to quarrel with this character: indeed, whenever I have attempted to analyse it, my attention has always been so much diverted from that part of its character which I knew, and drawn to that which I have found I could not know, that I have never been able to make up my mind, as to whether those, who deal in that tremendously profound philosophy whereby I have been so often put to a stand, and that flail-like wit, which kept me at a distance because I never could be certain how or where it might hit, see

clearly themselves, either what it is they use or how they are using it.

In literary and other criticism, "The Globe and Traveller" manifesteth the same mass, and driveth out the bottoms of things with nearly the same power and effect, as in politics. In literature and science it brings forward such a quantity of its own learning, that you can neither see its opinion of the thing under discussion, nor almost that thing itself; so that the only fact which it demonstrates to you on such subjects, is one which is not overflattering to your personal vanity—namely, that "The Globe and Traveller" is not only a great deal wiser than yourself, but a great deal wiser than it will condescend to tell you.

The British Traveller is a paper that has arisen since "The Traveller" took to general politics, and rambled over "The Globe." It belongs to the Society of Mercantile Travellers, by whom, I believe, it is farmed out, upon an understanding that it shall not be very violent either way in politics, but shall rather direct itself to the accumulation of facts connected with business, and the gathering together of such gossip as may enable the way-worn traveller, after he has made his day's journey among the tradesmen's shops, to while away the hour during which he takes his ease at his inn, and replenish him with fresh jokes wherewith to bring the pro-

vincials into a bargaining humour, and (harder task !) to a paying humour, upon the following day. In consequence of this its destination, "The British Traveller" is more learned in the matter of taverns, fly-waggons, stage-coach horses, and fares and rates, than any other which issues from the many tongues and pens of Babylon ; while in its selections it takes especial care to furnish a sufficient quantity of things that can be repeated. But as it addresses itself to those who during the whole course of their lives are merely passengers, it does not pause to settle the why and the wherefore of any thing ; and, with respect to a political or a critical opinion, you would as soon think of consulting the way-bill of a mail-coach, as of consulting "The British Traveller." It has a purpose, however ; and, for any thing that I have learned to the contrary, it appears to serve that purpose very well.

Nothing can show more strikingly the congruity and keeping that exists between the physical and the intellectual (if, after all, it be the intellectual) state of the Great Babylon, than that the matters which every where else are accounted the most brilliant, are least brilliant there. If you look into the writings of the genuine Babylonian bards, you will find, that, though they sometimes make use of diamonds, and gas-lamps, and eyes, and other matters, to set forth the ideas of brightness, they

very seldom draw upon the sun or the stars, or even upon what might be considered more favourite and familiar—the moon, for the purposes of illumination. The Babylonian sun, dimmed as he is by the three opposing forces, which bear rule in rotation—fog, smoke, and dust—is not merely shorn of his beams, but tarnished in those that remain; while the genuine Babylonian stars belong more to the terrestrial than to the celestial globe, and instead of garnishing the zones and zodiacs of the heavens garnish the pavements and parades of the earth. It is much the same with the Babylonian newspapers. There is supposed to be still continuing to be set forth within it an evening paper, which is called *The Sun;* but it is as rarely to be met with by Babel's streams, as the physical sun in a Babylonian November. It may shine, and probably does shine, in the country; but as it does not appear in any way to increase the quantity of metropolitan light, an account of it would form no part of metropolitan dissection; and therefore the rustic world may be allowed to embrown their minds by exposure to it, just as they embrown their bodies by exposure to that after which it is named.

Still, however, just as is the case with the physical sun, "The Sun" continues to number its months and its years, to record how much older the world is getting, and to perform its apparent diurnal re-

volutions, whether men heed its movements and take warning by its admonitions, or not. I have heard that "The Sun" has a peculiar kind of circulation: the provincial Corporation Members of Parliament —whether from an instinctive or an experimental perception, that what their constituents stand most in need of is light, I will not take upon me to determine—are said, and in many instances I know it to be the fact, to send down "The Sun" daily, as a sort of gratuitous illumination; but how or to what extent it has operated, or is calculated to operate, in this way, I will also not take upon me to determine.

As the stars are less subject to total obscuration from the fog than the sun is, so the Evening "Star" shines out a good deal more decidedly than the Evening "Sun;" and though it be not a journal of the greatest strength, or in the greatest repute, it is a fair, steady, honest, and rather respectable paper in its way. With a good deal of the coldness of a star, it possesses not a little of the fixity and duration,—it shines not much, but it shines steadily.

I know not whether, in this brief enumeration, I have either included all the number, or been true to all the characters of the daily journals; but I have had no desire to be partial, and no motive either to be silent or to speak out.

CHAPTER VI.

THE SUNDAY PRESS.

" This labour past, by Bridewell all descend,
(As morning-prayer and flagellation end,)
To where Fleet-ditch, with disemboguing streams,
Rolls the large tribute of dead dogs to Thames :
Great King of dykes ! than whom no sluice of mud
With deeper sable blots the silver flood.
' Here strip, my children ! here at once leap in ;
Here prove who best can dash through thick and thin,
And who the most in love of dirt excel,
Or dark dexterity of groping well.
Who flings most filth, and wide pollutes around
The stream, be his the *Weekly Journal's* bound ;
A pig of lead to him who dives the best—
A peck of coals a-piece shall glad the rest.' "

POPE.

WHETHER, when he endited these lines, Pope felt the double inspiration of the bard and the seer, and while he gave, perchance, an accurate estimate of the hebdomadal literature of his time, saw also in vision that the News-hall—the centre whence the Sunday Journals more especially, and

more numerously issue, it may be of little consequence to inquire; but it is a singular fact in the history of modern literature—or, to speak more correctly, it is a curious and peculiar feature in the Babylonian practice of printing and publishing—that the day which the ordinance of every Christian church, and the laws of every Christian state, set apart for bodily repose and moral improvement, should be the day, of all the days in the week, upon which the newspaper press drudges incessantly, and sends forth by far the greatest number of gossiping sheets of paper. I leave it to the saints and sophists, to estimate how far the wisdom or the wealth of the people is improved or deteriorated by those copious doses of four-penny stamps, charged with "News from all nations," and purporting to give a faithful portraiture of men and of things, from the King and the throne whereon he deigns to sit, to the criminal and the tread-mill at which he is compelled to drudge,—unfolding, as it were, the whole book of society, and leaving every man to pick out his virtue or his vice, as may best suit himself.

An engine which is so vast and so regular in its operation—which comes upon the greatest body of the labouring classes at the only time when they can afford leisure to read—and which, in fact, forms the principal, and with many the sole, source of reading and mental culture, seems worthy of more

attention, and of a larger share both of judgment and of intellect, than seem hitherto to have been bestowed upon it. When I state that fifty thousand newspapers—a very large number of which are purchased and read by the labouring classes—are distributed every Sunday morning, over a circle of forty miles diameter, of which London forms the centre, I certainly speak very considerably within the amount. Those papers form not only the Sunday instructors of the father and his comrades, but they become the *vade-mecum* of his family during the week; and much as I respect the organs of religious instruction, of all keys and all pitches, I am disposed to think that the Sunday press has a greater influence upon the minds and the morals of the working classes, and even upon those of society generally, in and near the Great Babylon, than the homilies of all the preachers, from the Lord Primate to the cobler, delivered in all sorts of places, from the splendid cathedral to the unenclosed common.

Whatever may be the nature of those Sunday journals, the great demand that there is for them, and the rapidity with which that demand has of late years increased, are unequivocal proofs of the improvement that has taken place among the poorer classes of the people; and whether it be asserted that this is the best or the worst species of read-

ing in which they could be engaged, it proves alike their desire of knowledge and their capacity for receiving it.

The Sunday papers are of course culled from the papers of the week; and as the Sunday journalist has six times the materials, and six times as much leisure to work upon them, as he who has to make his appearance daily, a much smaller quantity both of taste and of talent should make a much better production. In most cases, however, it does not appear that these advantages are improved; for among the Sunday journals, there are many which neither take the best parts of the daily ones, nor put them together in the best manner. They seem to know, either by intuition or from trial, that those for whom they write are more partial to the marvellous and the mischievous, than to that which is solid and pure; and hence, the stores laid up for Sunday consist as frequently of the nonsense, and folly, and vice of the week, as of its better qualities. Nor is it in their selections alone that that the manufacturers of Sunday papers evince a lower estimate of the taste of the readers than the daily journalists; for, with perhaps a few permanent exceptions, and certainly a few occasional ones, there is more brawling politics, more false philosophy, more coarse invective, more unfounded assertion, and more

"Fruits of dull heat and sooterkins of wit,"

in the Sunday papers, than in any other class even of Babylonian publications.

The Sunday papers may be arranged into several divisions,—such as those which are violent in their politics, and season that otherwise senseless matter with a reasonable quantity, and in many instances with more than a reasonable quantity, of individual character and private scandal; secondly, those which appear to have no object beyond the profit which is earned by the insertion of advertisements and the sale of copies—which risk no character, and spend no talent in original writing of any kind, and which show pretty clearly that they have not much to risk or to expend; thirdly, there are Sunday papers which confine themselves more immediately to the sporting world, and which use and circulate a language much more Babylonish than that of their brethren; fourthly, there are nondescripts, which are so continually altering their opinions and changing their manners, that nobody can determine either at what they are driving, or how they are driving at it, any farther than by the help of the general principle, that, in common with the rest of mankind, they are striving to do as little as ever they can, and to get as much as ever they can for the doing of it.

If I were to sum up in few words my estimate of the Sunday press, I should say, that (with the

exception, perhaps, of Pierce Egan, who deserves merit as being the founder of a new school of writing) there is not one of its productions worth reading, by one who reads the daily papers, saving and excepting "The John Bull;" and John's claim most certainly does not rest upon his being either an oracle of wisdom, or a preacher of righteousness. Upon many points, the Sunday "John Bull" outdoes both in stubborness of prejudice and vehemence of growling, his every-day namesake. His political opinions, abstracting those prejudices from them, are neither very liberal nor very profound; and, indeed, he usually has the discretion to avoid those intricacies of principle and of argument, in which his horns would be in danger of getting entangled. When, however, a matter is not too deep for him, or when his prejudice does not disturb his perception of it, no body knows the right better, or can state it with more hardihood, point, and effect, than this same "John Bull." You cannot help feeling that the Bull has gored with his horns, trampled with his hoofs, and switched with his tail, sundry persons and things which you would have been just as well pleased if he let alone: but still, you like the strength and spirit of the beast; and pardon him for occasionally setting his foot upon a flower, or wounding a sheep, in consequence of the glorious style in which he makes the yelping curs and use-

less puppies spin through the air. There is another thing which, unless he has given a drive either to yourself or to some great favourite, is very apt to occur to you as an excuse for a little ferocity in "The Bull,"—he has been so much baited, and baited by foes of such clamorous natures and such adverse dispositions, that it was enough to have put, not a Bull merely, but a whole drove of peaceable and laborious oxen, completely out of temper.

There is no paper which has been laid so often and so heavily at the door of the Treasury, as "The John Bull;" and though the mistake here be just as great as in any of the other cases, it has been admirably seconded upon the part of "The Bull" itself; and thus has conduced perhaps more to its success, than even the very great but withal very wicked weapon which it has wielded.

The events of the time at which this paper started were most favourable to it; and though the side which it took in the matters which then agitated and divided the country was certainly not the popular side, the event has proved, that, in as far as the support of the paper extended, it was the permanent one. The Church of England is a most substantial fabric, and, along with a good deal of prejudice, it has, perhaps, more power either to hurt or to help, than any other institution in the country. Its members are numerous;

they are scattered every where, they are all men of education, most of them are men of the world, and the whole bent of their education, their office, their character, and their ambition, both leads and enables them to take a very strong and a very constant hold upon society. The power of the people, as it is called,—the disposition of the popular voice, to council, to dictate, or to lead,—comes on with all the noise and all the foam, and discharges itself with all the splutter, of a wave; but, like a wave, it ebbs off again, and is still, distant and without effect, till some new impulse makes it return in the same turbulent and momentary manner as before: the power of such a body of men as the Church of England, who are so well instructed, so well organized, and whose duty it is to make themselves masters of the entire machinery of society, resembles, on the other hand, a river, the springs of which are perennial, and which therefore rolls on silently but surely, without any violent overflowings, but with a volume and a current which augment and accelerate as it runs. "The John Bull" contrived, at the very outset, to convince this powerful and united body that it could be serviceable to them; and their support and their countenance through good report and sometimes through report not wholly good, have been very serviceable to it in

return. Farther, "The John Bull," though not, as has sometimes been alleged, the first paper which dealt in personalities, and visited upon the private man (sometimes, rather ungallantly and, as itself must have afterwards regretted, upon the private woman,) the real or supposed sins of the public character, was yet the first that did these matters upon the same side, and perhaps the first upon any side, that did them in so unsparing and effective a manner.

I do not justify those proceedings; but I must say that, in some instances, they have been merited, in many more they have been provoked, and in the greater number they have, right or wrong, had about them that which is calculated to make any writing both read and remembered—wicked or not wicked, they said the very thing that told, and they said it straight out, without any symptom either of weakness or of fear. It is not because "John" has written things more malignant in intention than any body else, that the outcry against him has been the loudest; for if one were to take the trouble of performing the office of resurrection-man to sundry productions, full-sized as well as dwarfs, which are now quietly rotting away in the charnel-house of oblivion, one could find far more things intended to be bitter, than are to be found

in all the caustic numbers of "The Bull"—only they are neither said of the same persons, nor said so well.

The parties, against members of which the horns of "The Bull" have been directed, are perhaps fully as much obliged to it, as the party whose cause and whose measures it has upon the whole advocated. If the opposition be a valuable part of the system of British politics—and that it is a valuable part, nobody doubts—then its errors are as much matters of public regret, and the sins and follies of its members are just as legitimate objects for satire, as those of the Cabinet: nor can it be doubted, that the fear of exposure by "John Bull" has cleared the patriotism of the age of something more than a good deal of its folly.

As a vehicle of news, "The John Bull," if not the best furnished, is by far the lightest going.—He cuts down the wisdom of Parliament, till it be little else than a dry record of facts; and though he huddles the whole news of the week into a space not greater than that which some of his contemporaries devote to an alehouse brawl, or a vestry disputation, he still contrives to select his hints so well, as to let his readers know almost every thing of importance that is going on.

In matters where his prejudices do not operate, "John," without any pretensions to the solemnity

or the depth of philosophical criticism, is withal a very clever, and by no means an unfair critic: and there are many subjects, either foolish in themselves or injurious to society, which have been exposed by "John," in a style highly creditable to himself and highly useful to others.

The Examiner is a journal which may also be considered as belonging to the ultra (I cannot say to the strong) party class; and perhaps the best account that could be given of "The Examiner," is, that it is the very opposite of "The John Bull." Its positive character it would be difficult to draw. It is conceited, and yet conceit is not its leading feature: it is sick with what it considers sentiment and wit, and yet sentimentality is not the malady under which it constitutionally labours. With great pretensions to liberality, it is constantly showing the most overweening attachment to a certain set of principles, or rather dogmas, among which it has dwelt to absolute dotage, and displaying not merely a disregard, but an ignorance, of the whole of that splendid fabric of which it professes to worship a few of the minor points. It is a connoisseur, with a sort of very pretty vocabulary at its finger ends, and a very reasonable perception of the art of the Arts; but, somehow or other, it cannot manage the knowledge—the foundation part, even of these. Its philosophy is a fond philosophy;

but, somehow or other, the truths which it would lead one to discover are either little in themselves or little in utility. It is clear, without point; learned, without knowledge; polished, without manners; lofty, without elevation; and moral, without any pre-eminent degree of clearness in its perception of right and wrong.

"The Examiner" has no prototype: it is the alpha and the omega of its own school,—a school of but recent formation, and which seems rather fine and filmy for lasting very long. It sometimes says things which you cannot help admiring, and at other times it says things that you cannot help feeling to be wrong; but in both cases your feeling is softened and subdued by a certain admixture of pity, which comes you know not exactly from where, and is felt you know not exactly for what.

In propagating the system of its own school, "The Examiner" has, however, been so uniformly consistent, that no man can doubt its sincerity; and, upon the whole, it has conducted itself in a manner so gentle and lady-like, that you cannot be more offended at it, even when it loses its temper, than you are at a pretty damsel when she frowns.

"The Examiner" has acquired a considerable degree of character as a theatrical, a poetical, and literary critic, and as being well versed in all mat-

ters of *virtù* and embellishment. I am no judge of these matters; but I may be allowed to say, that the taste of "The Examiner" upon them all is much too fine or *ipsi-dixital* for me. Its standards of perfection in all those matters seem to be its own household goods; and they, being invented and made by a school of artists, whose merits are either not understood, or not duly appreciated, except among their own elect, the chief objection to "The Examiner" seems to lie in the same direction with that which I formerly hinted might be made against the whole of the Babylonian—"The London particular"—school of poetry and taste. It is very pretty as a shell-work of art, but the kernel of nature is entirely wanting: they by whom the school has been founded, and who have devoted so many weary hours to it, have learned to manage with great neatness a few of the lighter ornaments and flourishes of the subject; but by attempting to magnify these, and pass them off for the subject itself, they are constantly exposing themselves to the ridicule of those whose perceptions are not so fine, and whose experience has been upon a scale somewhat broader than their own.

I have stated these matters, not with the smallest intention of undervaluing the real merits of "The Examiner,"—of concealing its perfect single-heart-

edness and honesty in the course which it has seen meet to pursue; and certainly not with the slightest expectation, that any thing which either I, or any one else, could write, would make "The Examiner" different from what it is; but the curiosity of the journal itself, and the singular contrast that it makes with that other journal, which, though I like worse I read oftener, as well as a determination to set down the character of every thing Babylonian fairly and honestly, as it appeared to me, has induced me to write as I have written.

If the reward offered by "Gentle Dulness," in the lines which I have quoted at the beginning of this chapter, were to be distributed among the Sunday papers of the present time, "the Weekly Journal's bound" would, of course, fall to that class from which I have selected these two specimens; and the "lead" would be a far more appropriate, though by no means a more necessary gift, to that other class, at the head of which stands *The Observer*. Never was there a production of which the title was so provokingly ironical as the title of this one; for waving the matter of its own interest, which even the blind can see, "The Observer" appears to see less of what is really going on in the world, of almost any of its brethren. I beg its pardon: it sees "The Morning Chronicle"—with which it is connected; and it also sees, on the Sun-

day, all those long reports of law and police for Saturday, which are best adapted for Monday's "Chronicle." Furthermore, it sees "The English-man," and therein beholds, title excepted, the express image of itself. In rubric they are different; but they are

"Like in all else as one egg to another."

When "The Observer" was unconnected with other papers, and thus obliged to cull and finish the whole contents of its heavy columns for its own use, it was withal a laborious paper; and although there were about it no traces of spirit or elegance or wit, there was a mass of Saturday matter, especially reports of law cases, which gave it a sort of character of its own. Upon some occasions, too, it made great exertions as to quantity of report upon other matters, and as its solidity recommended it to the advertising world, it was well supported in that view; but since it entered into a holy alliance with "The Chronicle," and became not only as one brother, but as oneself, with "The Englishman," it has not been so much heard of. The establishment and the success of journals, of a more lively and active character, have also tended to draw the taste of the Sunday quidnuncs from the gloomy solidity of "The Ob-

server." So long as intelligence from the continent, delivered a day earlier than the daily papers could deliver it, and a quantity of printing as great as that contained in the largest of them, were recommendations to public notice, "The Observer" occupied a conspicuous place among the Sunday journals; but as these matters began to lose their interest, as the persons by whom Sunday papers are read began to get a little more comfortable in their circumstances, and with that a little more lively in their tastes, and more given to mirth than moroseness, it seems that they began to prefer a more light and spirited, if not a more valuable kind of Sunday reading; and thus, while, perhaps, owing to the other circumstances that I have mentioned, "The Observer" became, possibly, less observant itself, it certainly became less observed by the public. Independently, however, of positive falling off in the value of a Sunday journal, and of that negative falling off which arises from one journal standing still, or making less progress than the other journals, the taste of the readers of Sunday papers is an extremely capricious thing in itself. It belongs to the same class of tastes as that which displays itself in Covent Garden, and the other localities of public meeting; and as it is without union of purpose, or very clear discernment in the individuals of that which is really best,

it changes no one can tell how: and thus, though when it succeeds, and while it succeeds, a Sunday paper, from the small expenditure both of money and of talent for which it can be produced, is a very profitable speculation, it is a very precarious one; and unless it be that a paper of this kind takes a decided hold on a permanent class of persons, as "The John Bull" does on the church establishment, and the whip proprietors of the West, as Pierce Egan does on the sporting world, as two or three papers do upon the booksellers and other advertisers, or as two or three minor papers do upon the quacks, its absolute value is never very great, because it may be out-ranted or out-puffed by a rival, and thus lose half of its casual supporters—and three-fourths of its supporters are always casual, in the course of one week.

Of sporting papers—papers which chronicle the feats of dogs, and horses, and men, in their attempts to show which deserve the superiority in animal prowess, there are three: Pierce Egan, the flower of the flock; "The Dispatch;" and another "Life in London," which is not Pierce Egan's, but which has lately been gathered under the wings of "The Chronicle," "The Observer," and "The Englishman," and which, in addition to the "life" that it contains, may be supposed to re-

ceive a considerable quantity of that which cannot exactly be called life, from those with which it cohabits.

Persons who are extremely fastidious, and who are, perchance, more watchful over the principles of the rest of the world than they are over their own practices, in any other way than by taking heed that the same shall not be made too public, lest the world should thereby be tempted into sin and themselves betrayed into shame, cry out against the whole of this class of papers, and the whole practice of that from the detail of which they take their character; and I will allow that it is not a little singular, that the only journals, "The Morning Herald" perhaps excepted, (and it attends more to the sins than to the sports of society,) which rest their merits upon this ground, should make their appearance on the Sunday,—more especially considering the number of very pretty and very pious little matters in the shape of tracts, level to the meanest capacity, which may be had gratuitously or otherwise. I am very sorry at this: but I cannot help it; and, indeed, it does not appear that it can be helped by those who have a very respectable opinion of their own capabilities in the matter of reformation-working.

It seems, however, that when men and dogs are collected into large masses, they will amuse them-

selves and each other by trials of strength; and if the things are done in open day, there is no harm in the world's knowing all about them, the more especially as there is no means of preventing it. I am no admirer of "the Fancy;" but I should pause ere I decided that it is either a symptom or a cause of debasement and barbarity in the public mind or the public morals. People who have lived long in the world, become stationary, and lost to all relish for the enjoyment of the present time, are apt to look back at the "days when they were young," and fancy that, because they do not feel with the warmth and enjoy with the zest that they did in that morning of life, warmth and zest have departed from society: but this, instead of being demonstrative evidence, is really no evidence at all; and notwithstanding the prodigious increase of the Babylon, the vast streams, not of the purest description, which the provinces are continually pouring into its immensity, and notwithstanding the cover and the countenance which so thick and so varied a crowd offers to every sort of transaction, I suspect the fact will be found to be, that even this mass have become, and are every day becoming, more and more mild in their dispositions and orderly in their conduct. "As iron sharpeneth iron," saith the wise man, "so doth the countenance of man sharpen his fellow;" and I doubt whether

this sharpening can take place, without at the same time giving a little polish. That prize-fights, and, if you will, all sorts of idle sporting—whether of a lord casting his father's acres into the *moulinet* of a *roulette* table in Pall Mall, a lady squandering her money and her bloom at *Rouge et noir*, myself wearing my pen, and you, courteous reader, wasting your eyes or your spectacles about such a book as this,—these and all such matters are, I will allow, not the very wisest, or the most exceedingly profitable of all occupations, about which they or we might be busying ourselves; and therefore I cannot help thinking, that before we bring sweeping accusations against each other, we should all take care that we do not expose ourselves to the same severity in return. If every man were to "cast the beam out of his own eye," there would be no use for any one to attempt removing "the mote" from that of his brother.

Even upon the supposition that both the acting and the describing of those matters are mere outlets for the more turbulent and fiery humours of society, still it is better that they should discharge themselves thus openly, and receive the judgment, and feel the corrective influence of public opinion, than that they should be huddled up in corners, and breathed in whispers, as matters of mystery. Whatever is public must always have a share of

fairness about it, and keep up a character, which that which is concealed does not need; and though persons whose minds are all rapt, and whose moods are all melting, cry out against the deeds and the language of "the Fancy," there can be little doubt that the practice is rendered more fair, and, if humanity could be predicated of such a matter, more humane, than if nothing were written or read respecting it. Besides, if those annals of sporting serve no other purpose, they induce those to read who otherwise would probably not read; and thus not only prevent them, while they are reading, from doing worse, but may lead them to the reading of other matters. If a practice be had, and if it can be put an end to without causing the production of something worse, by all means put an end to it: but while it exists, it is always safe that it should be known; and though it would not tend much to increase the purity of the press, or to raise certain classes of persons in the public estimation, yet it would not materially lessen the morality of the age, though the deeds of other sportsmen were as fairly and as graphically reported as those of "the Fancy" are by Pierce Egan. Let the objectors consider whether the regular publication of their own obliquities would be likely to increase their number—let them think whether they would do many things which they now do, if a man with

a pen and an inkhorn were at their side; and when they have settled that, they will have cleared the ground for a fair and candid solution of the other question. If all the cases in which the fortunes and the characters of men are "hit foul," without even the benefit of an umpire or a spectator, could be prevented—and the knowledge of them would go a good way toward the prevention, then more would be done for the real improvement of society, than if all the public sports were at an end, and the champions of England and their chroniclers converted into methodist parsons.

But leaving wise men, and wiser women of both sexes, to settle the right and the wrong as to "the Fancy" and its annals, I may mention that Pierce Egan, in knowledge of the laws, the men, and the language connected with their matters, has no rival. "The Dispatch" is willing—and, from Mr. Harmer's connexion with it, it may be supposed to know the law of the matter; and the other "Life" is laborious; but neither of them has the science and the spirit, or, for aught that I know, the love of fair play, with which Egan is endowed and by which he is actuated.

In point of circulation and notoriety, *The Sunday Times* may be placed at the head of those Sunday papers which are of such a *quisquis* description, that no one can find out the cause of

their popularity,—at least from any intrinsic merits that they possess.

"The Sunday Times" has no political depth, and no political steadiness. It seems, indeed, to have no distinct apprehension of principle, no accurate knowledge of facts, no use of logic, and indeed nothing that you would call an exercise even of common judgment upon any one subject; and yet "The Sunday Times" rose more rapidly into circulation than almost any paper of the day. Occasionally there are in it things which are happily timed, and not absolutely bad in themselves: but there is a lack both of literary and of moral keeping about it, which renders it certainly not the most trust-worthy of all the public journals; and there may often be found, in juxta-position with an article which is tolerable in itself, something so completely incorrect and so outrageously nonsensical, that one would naturally suppose such a thing could not be crammed down the throat even of a boa constrictor of the largest swallow.

The success of this journal, in spite of so many internal deficiencies, is so curious a problem in newspaper history, that it may be worth while, if not absolutely to solve it, at least to collect a few data for the use of those who may either wish theoretically to make the solution, or practically to try a similar experiment. "The Sunday Times,"

then, appears to have derived a little success from the substantive part of its name, and the whole of the remainder from its projector—or rather from him into whose hands it came when it was languishing in its childhood, and gave no promise of its future breadth. The name "Times" led many to suppose that it was connected with the daily journal, and thus would have the advantages of all its extensive information, great power, and editorial vigilance; and though this was at all times an assumption for which there was not even the slightest foundation, yet it took with the public, and by some of them continues to be believed to this day.

But this part of the case is neither the strongest nor the most curious: the management of the proprietor was so unique, that whatever had been his name, it is probable that the success would have been considerable; and if it be no proof of the wisdom of that part of society by which Sunday papers are purchased and read, it is an explanation of the kind of wisdom that is best fitted for turning them to its own advantage. This proprietor, aware that nobody but himself could carry his schemes into execution, took upon him the management of the journal, down to the minutest details. He was a man who had not suffered much from the severity of education: he was not versed even in the light literature of the day; he knew no science, and

very few facts in the history either of things or of men: he could not even write without breaking the rules of grammar—the rules of logic he could not break; and therefore he was all along obliged to employ some person or other to write a few articles for him, and turn into something like English a few more which he blocked out for himself. Those literary deficiencies were not without their usual concomitant—instability of views and a disposition to adopt the last opinion which any body offered him, however much it might differ from that which he had espoused only a few minutes before, or which he had expressed or caused to be expressed in the preceding number of his journal, or perhaps in a preceding column of the same number.

If, previously to the trying of the experiment, it had been stated that a person thus gifted, or perhaps I should rather say ungifted, and who, moreover, was not held in perfect adoration by the superior ranks of society, was to undertake the management of a public journal, and prosecute it with great success, it might naturally have been supposed that mention would have been made of exhibiting hemlock, and shaving the cranium. But in literature—at least in newspaper literature—as well as in religion, "the children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of

light." He to whom I allude, though he had not been schooled after the fashion of learned men, had been schooled in mysteries which the event proved to be fully more effective toward the success of a weekly journal,—he had studied society — especially that portion of society in which such a journal finds the majority of its readers; and, if he did not know how, to give them that which was good in itself, he knew full well both how to give them what would answer his own purpose, and when to give it. By every species of puffing—by advertisement, by placard, by going round to the news-venders and coffee-houses, and making a desperate outcry for "The Sunday Times" in all places where it was not, he contrived to set the people a-talking about it; and this talking he contrived to prolong, and to get repeated and redoubled, by seizing hold of every circumstance and occurrence likely to interest the populace, always declaring loudly and roundly, though it had been copied and even curtailed from one of the best-known daily journals, that his account of it was original and the best. By persevering in this course, and assuming a tone of liberality on the one hand and a tone of hardihood on the other, he took his position; and to those who knew how it was taken, opened a pretty clear view of the sagacity of that judgment by which the Sunday papers of the Babylon are tried.

I should not have mentioned these circumstances, even on account of their own intrinsic curiosity, were it not that they will save me from mentioning a pretty general feature of Babylonian speculation, and one which is well worthy of being borne in mind by those who, somewhat doubtful of the efficacy of their own talents and their own virtues, are still anxious to turn the Babylonians to profitable account. It is this: a man who is known and connected, and esteemed and respected in consequence, succeeds and is rewarded by those who know him, in proportion as he does faithfully and well; whereas a man who is not known, and, it may be, not respected, has ever an ampler field before him in those who know him not; and success with them depends almost, if not altogether, upon the noise that he can make, and the boldness of his pretensions, without any regard whatever to the truth. Hence, in consequence of those two sources of success, and those two modes of working them, Babylon becomes the best place in the world, both for well-gifted and well-respected men of ability, and for those quacks who have no better metal to offer than the bronze of their own faces. But to those who stand in an intermediate degree, success is rather more doubtful; and without the union of talents and connexion, or that happy impudence which, in its own sphere, not only renders them

both unnecessary, but answers better than them both, Babylon the Great may feel as desolate as her elder sister, who moulders in melancholy oblivion upon the deserted bank of the Euphrates—an admonition and, perchance, a type for other great cities. This, however, is a digression; though, I trust, neither an ill-timed nor an irrelevant one—for success in that particular case which gave scope for the digression was the result of talent and study, though not exactly of the kind which are registered as such among those who account themselves the sages and saints of the world.

There is no need for naming, or even counting, the rearmost files of the Sunday newspapers; and indeed any register that could be made would be out of date before the most rapid machinery of the press could publish it. The accessions that are made to them by production, and the diminutions that are effected by dissolution, resemble those which during the summer months take place among the insect tribes. Sunday papers form a sort of lottery at all times of the year, and especially for a month or two about the commencement of the Session of Parliament; and though the prizes do not bear a higher proportion to the blanks than is the case in other lotteries, that does not dissuade persons, especially persons whose fortunes are in

jeopardy of becoming desperate, from wagering against the probability in the one case as well as in the other. Notwithstanding, however, the number of those minor journals—minor at least in notoriety and in consequent duration; and notwithstanding the good points (and some of them are very good) in those which I have more particularly enumerated; there seems still to be room, and with proper management there might be demand, for a Sunday paper, which might be better, if not than them all, at least than any one of them,—a paper which, by employing the same quantity of talent and of labour which is bestowed upon the superior daily journals, might exhibit as accurate a picture of the week as these do of the day—which would carefully leave out all rumours which had been contradicted, reduce every statement to what it were worth, by clearing away the verbiage and the nonsense; and thus presenting a record which should be valuable for its truth, desirable for its taste, and which could afterwards be referred to as a memorial of things which had actually taken place.

The poverty, however, both of the head and of the purse of those who usually speculate in this department of the press, seems to preclude any hope that such an accession to its value is likely soon to be made. Instead of this, the new journals which start up are generally worse than the old

ones: they have no more talent, they seem to employ even less assistance, and they want the tact and dexterity which are derived from practice. At some times, and among some of them, a practice takes place analogous to the broth-making in the Scottish village. In those days, and in that land, the villagers could afford no beef; but one richer than the rest contrived to get possession of a marrow-bone—of what animal it is not said—and that bone was, upon Sundays and holidays, hired to the other villagers at a penny Scots—being one-third of a farthing English, for every hour that it tumbled in the sea of barley and water. Now much in the same manner are some Sunday papers made. I omit the case of "The Observer" and "Englishman," who borrow and lend the bone with each other and with "The Chronicle," and "The Sunday Times," which is boiled up into I know not how many Mercuries and Telegraphs; but I have heard of other cases where the matter of a newspaper, ready set and wanting nothing but the title, has been hawked round some two or three offices, and come forth upon the Sunday morning under two or three forms, all of them of course equally original—because all exactly the same.

CHAPTER VII.

THE HINDER-END OF THE PRESS.

Occupet extremum scabies. HOR.

"Not ******* so: drawn endlong by his skull,
Furious he sinks, precipitately dull;
Whirlpools and storms his circling arm invest,
With all the might of gravitation blest.
No crab more active in the dirty dance,
Downward to climb, or backward to advance;
He brings up half the bottom on his head,
And claims at once the Journals and the lead."

DUNCIAD.

FOR the sake of simple and easy distinction, rather than from the logical accuracy of its application, I have ventured to use the words "The Press," to denote those public Journals of daily or of weekly recurrence, whose object it is to record or to comment upon the political and social transactions of the day, with only such subsidiary notices of matters connected with the progress of mind,

and the permanent stores of science and literature, as serve ordinary readers for the purposes of ordinary conversation—or rather, perhaps, which give the proprietors and conductors of the different journals a claim upon the support of those who deal in those other matters; and according to this application of the words I have given, or at least I meant to give, as clear and as candid a statement of that part of them which are properly called newspapers, as my abilities and my room would admit. In all of these, the most valuable part is certainly that which records facts; and it may be assumed as a general truth, that the newspaper, whether daily or weekly, which is most industrious and most tasteful in the making up of this record, is the one which is of the greatest value.

But in supplement to this the regular army of the Press, there are certain guerillas, which, like the guerillas among men, are always most numerous and most active when the times are unsettled, and become comparatively few, feeble, and uninteresting, as peace stills the alarms and prosperity appeases the complaints of mankind. Those guerillas—this "hinder-end of the Press," as one may term it for the want of a better name, was far more extensive and far more noisy a few years before, than at the time when I took notes of the wonders of Babylon. It found the maximum

of its encouragement, the zenith of its power, in those times when event crowded so closely on event, and alarm followed alarm in such rapid succession, that the public were quite unable of themselves to keep the operations of commenting upon the present and prophesying about the future, up to the reality of the one and the anticipation of the other. This afforded scope for a set of journalists, who should supply arguments and opinions for those who had no leisure to make them for themselves, and who, with daring if not with skilful hand, essayed to lift the veil of futurity, and answer all the purposes of seership to those who were at their own wit's end as to what might happen: their object, in short, was not to communicate knowledge, but to vend speech; not to furnish the public with materials for information and judgment, but to save it the labour of deliberation and reflection, by accommodating it with all sorts of judgments upon all sorts of subjects ready made and fitted for immediate use.

Foremost and fiercest in this class stood William Cobbett, a very colossus in his way—of so robust a construction and so perennial a constitution, that he alone remains, while the lapse of a few brief years has swept away the others, few ask and nobody answers where. The present times have been productive of marvels beyond all precedent,

and of these Babylon the Great has possessed a share numerous and wonderful in proportion as she exceeds all other cities; but of all modern marvels, at least in a political and literary sense, William Cobbett is, perhaps, the greatest—the one to whom Hohenlohe and Hunt, and every other person whose name can after the same fashion be named, must succumb; and in whose presence all the polemics and pamphleteers, upon all sides of all modern questions, and all views of all subjects, possible and impossible, must bow down in reverence, and own their superior. Cobbett is not a man who has had many of the advantages of what the world call education; and his vision seems to be too broad for discerning, not only the metaphysical, but the political and moral causes, of the qualities and discriminations of things and events: but Cobbett is, notwithstanding all this, a very wonderful person, and one who, had he husbanded the powers with which nature has endowed him with any thing like even a moderate share of discretion, would have had a good deal of influence in the world. Cobbett has, however, added another to the many instances upon record, that strong natural powers, especially when they incline to the rough and surly cast, and when they are not checked by good education and kept in order by good sense, may, in the end, produce only the exposure

of him by whom, if better trained and managed, they might have been turned to good account.

The violence with which Cobbett swung round from one line of political conduct to another which was completely the reverse, might have been taken as an augury of his ultimate fate; and the vehemence of his assertions upon all manner of subjects, whether he happened to understand them or not, might have pointed conclusions the same way. But however ill Cobbett might be grounded in the principle of many subjects about which he wrote, there were others, and many others, who were worse; and these yielded at once, not to the convincing power of his arguments, but to the tone of confidence in which that which served him in the stead of logical argument was put. There was, perhaps, never a political writer who shifted his positions so often as Cobbett, and there certainly never was a prophet who had at once upon his hands so many unsuccessful predictions: but Cobbett put so bold a face upon the matter, asserted so roundly in the teeth of experience, and built up the tumbling fallacies of his soothsaying so very often, and with such an air of confidence in their stability, that a larger portion of disciples shifted their ground with him, and doubted the evidence of their own senses, because he had prophesied the other way, than perhaps ever moved at the beck or echoed the

words of any other modern politician who was without power to reward his followers, and probably without will, though the power had been given him.

Cobbett was a strong writer certainly, and the stumps of him have a good deal of strength to this day; but his strength was the strength of slang, a happy though a harsh turn for calling names, and a faculty, not of demonstrating that his view of a matter was right and the opposite view wrong, but of pointing the scorn of the rabble to whatever it suited his interest to dislike. Cobbett was not like a trained warrior of any sort, either with artificial or with natural weapon; he resembled a peasant of uncommon strength, half out of his temper and half out of his wits, armed with a gigantic flail, with which he so laid about him in all directions, that nobody cared for coming within the wind of it. Even when he was most vigorous at this exercise, he himself used to suffer as much by it as any thing upon which he was threshing; for the flail was swung with so much clumsiness and vehemence, that it was continually coming rap upon his own head, with such substantial bangs, that if the head itself had not happened to be cudgel-proof, it would certainly have been fractured.

The wildness, the ferocity, and, as much perhaps as any thing, the novelty, of a man occupied

in this fashion, would of itself have been sufficient to attract the attention of the populace; and when he saw the bent of their humour, and commenced threshing in the way that they appeared to wish, they began by thinking that there was method in his madness, and ended in believing that it was all method, and without any madness whatever.

The influence which, some ten or a dozen years ago, he possessed over the minds of reformers, or rather those calling themselves reformers—especially in the provinces—would, if the thing were not fresh in hundreds of memories, be reckoned altogether impossible. Of those sage personages there were many who did not believe in Holy Writ; many more who did not believe in the annual and diurnal motions of the earth; many too who did not believe that honour or oath was any bond; and they all, with one accord, united in disbelieving that there could be honesty in any official man, or that it was possible either to restore England to any thing like prosperity, or even to bring back her circulating medium to the standard of the Mint. They believed none of these things; and they were equally sceptical about a countless number of others, which the more calm and contemplative of mankind have been at a good deal of pains to demonstrate: but they one and all believed, not only in the invincibility, but in the infallibility, of

William Cobbett. By what strange operation—by what "airs from heaven and blasts from hell"—he had been rendered invincible and infallible, at a time when so many of those who had devoted their lives to single points over which he swept his flail were by the same parties pronounced to be all drivelling and in the wrong, they did not seem to give themselves the trouble of inquiring; and they never paused to think that the existence of such an intellectual giant as they made Cobbett, would have been in itself much more of a miracle than any of the things which they scouted and derided upon the ground that they were mere impositions.

This strong impression which was produced upon Cobbett's worshippers—they could not be called disciples, for they did not study and imitate, they only believed and wondered—produced a considerable effect even upon those who neither wished nor could believe that all Cobbett's sayings were truth, or that all his prophecies would be fulfilled. Upon this account they began to regard him as something more than common—as a being which at all events it would be just as well to let alone; and when he found this, it induced him to assume a more daring tone, both in his disquisitions upon the present and in his divinations as touching the future: and had Cobbett had the discretion to place the fulfilment of all his prophecies at the

distance of a hundred, or even fifty years, Cobbett might have gone down to his grave with the character of the greatest master of divination that modern times had produced.

But notwithstanding the magnitude of his real powers, which within a certain sphere is not small—notwithstanding the devotedness of his worshippers—notwithstanding the awe which he struck into those who thought differently—and notwithstanding that many of his predictions seemed for a time to be in fair progress toward fulfilment, Cobbett was all the time nothing but a mere man, and a man too not of the profoundest mind, or the clearest discernment—although he had that which went very far in supplying the place of both. The first symptom of Cobbett's intellectual mortality, was the great homage that he began to feel himself warranted in paying to himself. This is a danger to which public favourites are always exposed—a danger too which is almost certain, sooner or later, to tumble them down, if the base upon which they stand be not all the broader. When a man finds that other people worship him, he can hardly avoid worshipping himself; because one knows full well, that how high soever he may stand in the opinion of the multitude, he must stand still higher in his own opinion. Whatever is the constant object of a man's worship, is apt to be also the constant ob-

ject of his attention; and therefore, as even Cobbett was unable to devote that attention to self which he did devote, and at the same time to observe or understand how the rest of the world was going on; and as by this time he had been taught to believe, that of the two subjects of attention, himself was the most important, he very naturally became a little blunted both to external things and to external actions.

That a prophesying man like Cobbett should have made many foolish and fragile predictions one can easily understand; but that out of so many, so few should have been fulfilled, is rather a curious matter. It is, however, not a matter of very difficult solution. The probability that any man shall predict rightly with regard to the future, depends a good deal upon the portion of the past on which he grounds his predictions: a year will be a better datum than a day, an age than a year, and so on. Now I have mentioned, and I believe the whole tenor of Cobbett's writings will confirm it, that, however strong may be his perception, and however accurate his estimate of things which are immediately present, he has not paid much attention to the past: indeed, the intensity of his present perceptions, and his continual occupation with the events of the day, must have weakened both his power and his desire of so attending; and

hence, there is no need to bring against him a charge of voluntarily and violently asserting what he knew was not likely to happen. Possibly he was deceived himself, and took his opinions as much for gospel as the most dotard and dreaming of his followers. In so far, however, as the non-fulfilment of the prophecies affected the infallibility of the seer, the question as to whether he himself did or did not believe them, had, or could have, very little influence; and I have stated it merely in order to show, that in dissecting the character and pretensions of this notorious writer, I am actuated by no motive other than a desire to state the facts, and conjecture at the causes as fairly and with as much probability as possible.

The loss of Cobbett's invincibility has been as complete as that of the other element of his singular character; and in this he has been like some other great men,—he has done that for himself which he and his friends used to boast all the world could not do for him. His assertions upon all subjects have been bold, and upon most subjects have been held to be incontrovertible; but in the course of his multifarious productions, he has so contrived to state them with exactly the same boldness and dogmatism upon the very opposite sides, that, like the + and the — of Algebraists, they have so completely neutralized each

other, that there are very few points indeed upon which the final equation will not stand thus:

Cobbett's opinion = 0.

The means which he adopted to prevent the promulgation of this conclusion, when he foresaw, as he must have foreseen, that it would be the one ultimately arrived at, hastened rather than hindered its arrival. Like Lord Peter, when he could not succeed in convincing his brothers by argument that the brown loaf was a shoulder of mutton, he tried the effect of swearing. Not being like Lord Peter, a religionist by office, he did not go about to inflict the pains of the anathema upon those who doubted, but he vowed to do, or to permit to be done, to himself, all sorts of things in the event of the prophecies' not being fulfilled. He was to roast himself upon gridirons, or allow others so to roast him; and, if I remember rightly, he was to eat himself after being duly roasted.—This part of the prophecy has not been more literally fulfilled than the other parts, but still it has had some sort of fulfilment: others have roasted Cobbett, though not upon a gridiron; and Cobbett has eaten, not himself indeed, but that which, considering him as a public writer, the only light—or darkness if you will—in which I am entitled to consider him, comes nearly to the same thing,—he has eaten his own words.

The most singular and the most recent of Cobbett's *tergiversations,* [I believe the proper word is *verbiversations*; for after all, it is a turning of the words and not of the man,—Cobbett being, as I should suppose, pretty much the same, both back and face, when he adores the Virgin in dreams and kisses the Holy Apostolic toe in vision, as when he was hurling his objurgations against all the saints in the calendar, and rating popes, and cardinals, and jesuits, as persons with whom he could hold no communion ;] that there may be no dispute about a word however, I shall say that the most singular of all Cobbett's *versations*—would be his change from " No Popery !" to " O Popery !" were it not that there is here both a physical and a metaphysical cause. Every body knows that the adoration of bones is one of the points in which " O Popery" differs from " No Popery ;" and after Cobbett fell to relic-hunting in America, the turn which his written faith would take became a very self-evident matter. I would not have mentioned the bones, had it not been that upon them may be grounded a very excellent plea in justification of the change of the words; and farther, that I may put those who are curious in these matters in possession of some rumours that I have heard, which bring the authenticity of the relics into some sort of suspicion. It seems it had been traditionally reported in America,

that the carcase inhumated where Cobbett performed his resurrection, could not, when in life, have written the "Rights of Man" at all, and would not have done so, although it could; seeing that it was reported to have been nothing else than a great baboon which a ship-captain had brought from Madagascar as a curiosity, and which, after being chained and cudgelled for twenty years, had been deposited in the place aforesaid. Not having seen the skeleton myself, I am unable to say whether this be or be not the fact; but I think it not at all unlikely, and moreover, I see no reason why the bones of a baboon, or even of a donkey, should not have answered the purpose just as well as any others. If, however, the relics be still in existence, it would be worth while to send the skull to the phrenologists, in order that the powers and the propensities might be ascertained; and also to remit the bones of the feet, the *dentes canini*, and the *os coccygis*, to Mr. Lawrence, or any other person equally skilled in physiology and comparative anatomy, who would settle at once whether the said relics belong to a tailed or tailless organization—indicating whether the owner were a monkey or a man. At the same time that this were done, it would not be amiss to send a file of the Political Register to some syllable and sentence broker, in order that he might ascer-

tain, if possible, whether any, and if any, which of the varous opinions set forth is the right one.

The great importance of this writer, as an article of public property, and the small probability there is that any thing will remain, after the lapse of a very few years, by which an estimate of his merits can be formed, have induced me, and indeed forced me, to devote so much of this chapter to him, that the remainder of it will not contain the other writers of this class—or rather the writers of a class that would like to call itself this—few and small as they are. I have heard that there are such things, printed and attempted to be sold weekly in the metropolis, as insults to decency and slanders against religion, by some ignorant and miserable creatures who have never had it in their power to practise the one or to feel the other; but many as are the faults and follies of the Great Babylon, and they are not few, it seems that even the most hopeless and helpless of the population have sense enough given them, and virtue enough left, to know that such matters are a disgrace.—They are not obtruded upon any body; they are so obscure, that I know not whether they belong to present or merely to recent times. Perhaps they are all in their graves, and if so, to dig them out would be a work as completely of supereroga-

tion, as it was in Cobbett to delve up the remains of Paine—or the baboon; and to agitate any question which could arise concerning them, would be still more unprofitable than the agitation of that as to which of the two genera of animals to refer the bones.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE JOURNALS *a*.

"Hear you! in whose grave heads, as equal scales,
I weigh what authors' heaviness excels."

THE portion of discharge from the Babylonian wisdom and the Babylonian wits, which falls to be considered under this title, is that which professes to attend more to science, to literature, and to the arts, than to the mere occurrences of the day; and I may be permitted to remark, *in limine*, that though this be by far the elder born, it does not appear to have grown to such perfection as the other. At any rate, upon a comparison of the periodical literature of the present day with that which was in existence about an age ago, one can mark no such improvement as that which is visible in the productions of the newspaper press. About the one there is all the freshness and the vigour

of young life, while the other is stunted and dwarfed, and appears to have

"Fallen into the sear and yellow leaf."

The causes of this difference may perhaps be found, partly in the nature of the things themselves, and partly in the changes which have taken place in the tastes and habits of society. The journalists have a comparatively limited range of subjects; almost all of these are old, and have been, with a little change in the circumstances, perhaps, written about again and again, and sometimes in so masterly a manner, as to destroy not only all hope of excelling, but almost all desire of emulation, on the part of the modern who has to spin his brains by the week, the month, or the quarter, cheering his labour by hammering over and over again the same old tunes. The subjects, again, to which the newspapers pay their attention, may be frivolous, but they are fresh; they concern the practical pursuits of mankind more nearly, and therefore they come into favour more naturally and with less effort upon either side.

The most melancholy symptoms of decay are, however, to be found in those journals which profess to be scientific. The fact is, that in the whole range of Babylonian publication, extended and crowded as it is, the quantity of scientific productions is much smaller, and their quality much

inferior, than was the case when publishing did not extend to perhaps one-tenth of its present breadth. This cannot arise from any deterioration of the powers of men; because, considering the facilities that there now are for study, and the increased number of persons who have a capacity for it, there must be in England, and by necessary consequence in the Babylon, more scientific knowledge at the present time, than there was at those times when the printed crop of it was more abundant and rich. Neither can it arise from any desire on the part of the mercantile publishers of books to discourage one species of productions for the sake of another; because their preference, like that of all other mercantile men, must ever be given to that which commands the readiest and the most extensive sale. It must, therefore, lie with the public themselves: and if one look abroad into society, one cannot help observing that the demand for the practical applications of science are so great, that men of real science are called upon to perform more active and important, and more lucrative duties, than the reparation of books; and thus, though there be no want of capacity, and also no want of materials, the operation of writing is left to those who are neither well gifted in the one respect, nor well furnished in the other. Accordingly we find, that, whatever be the period of their

appearance, whatever names may be stuck upon their title-pages, and from the nursery of whichever Society they may come forth, the scientific journals are the most inane and the most obscure of all periodical things, and answer scarcely another purpose than that of demonstrating how little of the genuine scientific spirit has been left to animate the "learned bodies," which still continue to meet their meetings, dine their dinings, distribute their honours and expose—and truly it is an exposure—their transactions. If any one be sceptical upon these points, let him compare the last volumes of the Royal Society's Transactions with the first,—or even the Journal of the Royal Institution with all its patronage and all its members, with the earlier and better volumes of the "Philosophical Journal" collected and published by the late Mr. Nicholson.

The fact is, that in this respect the public seem to have grown away both from the journals and the institutions; for they do not appear disposed to support the one or the other. The failure of the Surrey Institution, the inutility of the London one, the mockery of the Society of Arts, the maudlin solemnity of their gravityships at Somerset House, and the mild keeping and repose of the Royal Literarians, may all be appealed to as evidence of what I am saying: and as to the journals, again, they are perhaps the only species of periodical

publications which do not pay, and therefore the only ones to which—at a time when it has become necessary that every man should bring every valuable talent that he possesses fairly and frankly to the public market—no man will contribute to, if, either in the way of publication or otherwise, he can turn his abilities to any profitable account. No doubt the learned bodies, and such heads as God has given them, continue to set forth a few odds and ends for the purpose more of demonstrating their own wisdom than of adding to that of the public; but really, both from the nature of the things themselves and from the perfect indifference with which they are received, it is pretty evident that the demonstration would be as clear, and the addition as great, without the publication as with it.

With regard to the literature, the case is different. I do not say that the literary journals are either more learned or more profound, in the present state of Babylon and of the public, than they formerly were; but I am disposed to think, from the many attempts that are made at their establishment, as well as from the lighter materials of which they are composed, and from the more immediate connexion that these materials are made to have with the events of the day, that they are more popular, and therefore more profitable. So long

as they continue to favour the public with abstract disquisitions upon virtue, and theoretical diatribes against vice, by those whose own virtues and vices were by no means of the highest character, they are echoes, and folks cannot be expected to listen to them, unless when they are idle; but when they leave the disquisition, and give us the thing itself, whether it be high or low, virtuous or vicious, we receive it as something which adds to the knowledge of facts; and, receiving it as such, we pardon the sauce of sentiment or saying in which it floats, however meagre or however rancid.

That portion of the journals which assumes the form, or at least the name, of criticism, is the one which has in these days undergone perhaps the greatest change; and much as has been done to facilitate the manufacture of books by the application of machinery both to the preparing and the printing of the materials, I doubt whether the craft of reviewing may not have profited more by the same admirable application. "*Dum brevis esse laboro obscurus fio,*" is completely reversed and refuted here. The labour of the critics has been wonderfully shortened; and yet, instead of being thereby obscured, it has become, if not absolutely clear, at least much more easily seen through than ever. But I shall have to advert to these matters, as the spectres of the journals pass in succession before

me, and therefore I shall assume the attitude and the gravity necessary for receiving and doing justice to the goodly show,—of which I must attend first to them of the week, as they have the least time to wait ere they be elbowed into oblivion by their successors.

Among the weekly journals, the foremost place ought perhaps to be assigned to the "Mechanic's Magazine;" not because it is the work of the most experienced of the professed writers, but for the very opposite reason. The falling off of the scientific journals, the distances of time at which those that still exist make their appearance, the high price at which they have to be sold in order to replace the mere cost of paper and printing, and I may add the trifling and unpractical nature of most of their contents, had rendered them in general inaccessible, and where accessible, useless to the artisans,—a class of persons among whom knowledge had in the mean time been making the most rapid advances; and improvements, inventions, and discoveries of all kinds, had been increasing in a corresponding ratio.

Many must have been aware, from the great improvements that had been taking place in every department connected with mechanics, that a great store of produced knowledge, and an unlimited capacity of producing more, must have existed

among the operatives, but must have been in a great measure lost both to society and to themselves from the want of a channel through which it could be communicated. It could not be expected that men who had to wield the hammer and work the saw, whose heads had no sooner invented than their hands were at work to execute, could take much interest in the gossamer leaves of that which in these times is called philosophy. It could not be expected, and it would have been absurd to wish for such an expectation, that the men whose business it is promptly and immediately to make that which is useful to society, should sit down and thumb a dozen of pages, in order to ascertain whether a small moss that grows no where nearer than the Mountains of the Moon in Abyssinia, and is a great—or rather a small rarity even there—be green inclining to red, or red inclining to green; they must have been presumed to be too much occupied about things calculated to make life agreeable, for following learned persons through their long and sinuous huntings—huntings in which, like the cur with the stag, their first glimpse is the nearest—after the thing called life itself, which after all is not a thing, but a circumstance. They could not be expected to attend to these things, or to care about them; and therefore it could not be hoped that they would pay their quarterly seven-and-sixpence in order to know how very foolishly Master This

Thing, or Mistress That Thing, might happen to be wasting the time which, in a plain man's estimation, had been granted them for other and more energetic purposes.

But though the harvest, of intellect and of the proceeds of intellect, which was thus accumulating and ripening, must have been known to the great, it is rather singular that the reaping of it was so long protracted; and considering the capacity that there not only was, but must have been known to be, among the mechanics of England, the readiness with which they would exercise that capacity for their mutual benefit, and the great popularity and high reward that would attend him who should first clear a proper arena for those numerous and skilful workmen, it is really matter of astonishment that "The Mechanic's Magazine" should be a production but as of yesterday. When, indeed, it was once established, the eyes of people were opened to its utility; and imitations of it have accordingly been tried with various success, but in general with success more in proportion as the plan and their execution are assimilated to those of the original. The advantages of "The Mechanic's Magazine" are many and great: it is the work of no dreaming theorist, no dotard would-be philosopher, no pioneer in the fields of writing, who delves to the same extent, and with the same intention, whe-

ther he happen to know the nature of the soil or the substance through which he delves or not; but of practical mechanics,—men whose lives are in general devoted to, and whose livings are in general earned by, the use of that of which they seek the improvement. He who does not at once see, that, in the improvement of mechanical details, a dozen of real mechanics are worth "a hundred head of Aristotle's friends," whatever other trouble he may put one to, is no fit subject with whom to argue; and when it is borne in mind, that the intelligent mechanics of Britain are not merely thousands but millions, a judicious selection of what they have to say, in whatever language they may choose to say it, is incalculably more valuable than all that could be obtained on the same subjects from any other quarter. If the matter at issue were politics, or preaching, or blood-letting, or book-making, or any thing else which demands a particular class of people and a peculiar course of study, then I should object to taking the suffrages of the mechanics as the infallible rule with regard to it: but just for the very same reason, I must think, and it is right that I should express it, that the mechanics themselves are the only fit persons for furnishing the materials for "The Mechanic's Magazine;" and were they to ask and to obtain those materials from even the best of the Babylonian literati, such

a proceeding would involve, if not the same degree, at least the same kind of absurdity, as though the Chancellor of the Exchequer were to employ his tailor to draw up the annual budget, or his Grace of Canterbury to collect the materials of his visitation address from the watermen at Lambeth Stairs.

The fact of its emanating from the mechanics themselves, and therefore being as extended and as permanent as they are, must be considered as the pre-eminently valuable feature of this Magazine; and it appears so completely to have occupied this ground, as to preclude its rivals from any thing like a corresponding participation in it. Other advantages, such as cheapness of price and frequency of publication—and they are no mean recommendations in their way—they may possess in common with it: but it is not the circulation of a cheap publication, and the circulation of it frequently, that alone are calculated to do good—a thing might be given every day, given gratis, or even given with a premium, and it might still be possible that it might produce no good effect. It is not even the intrinsic merit of the articles contained in "The Mechanic's Magazine" upon which I would rest its superiority; for in looking into it I have found many things that were coarse, several that were visionary, and a few that were nonsensical: but

the grand, the redeeming circumstance — that which is more valuable than the choicest productions of professional writers, is, that this publication has excited a spirit of inquiry among a large and valuable class of men, and added to the stock of general information the results of an enormous quantity of practical talent—the best of all kinds of talent, which before it had this stimulus and this scope, was allowed to lie utterly waste, or at least confined within the limited range and limited duration of individual artists, instead of being propagated to every place, and preserved for successive generations.

The great cause why the moderns have added so much to the intelligence and the comforts of society is, that the Press brings every addition that is made to knowledge into immediate use, and prevents any thing from being lost; and, that England has prospered more since the revival of letters than any other country, at the same time that the Press in England has been in the most vigorous and most unconstrained exercise, is a proof that, like all other good things, it is best when left to its own management, without the fetters of direct political despotism on the one hand, or the indirect and equally pernicious despotism of small and conceited virtuosi on the other. I have mentioned already, that the genius of the present times, and the ne-

cessities and habits of the English, and more especially of Babylonian society, do not require, or even allow, that so large a proportion of talent shall be employed in retired and abstract speculation, as when men were less intent upon acting and enjoying, and when public and private expenses were not so pressing in their demands: but just in proportion as the number of retired and laborious students has diminished—or, to speak more correctly, has not increased with the increase of the population—the number both of thinkers and inventors, who carry on these processes for the double purpose of amusing the intervals of their labour, and lightening their burden of it, has increased. All that any one of those persons may do within a short time may not be great, but they are so many, that the amount of the whole is, in its magnitude as well as in its importance, one of the best additions that could be made to the recorded knowledge of the passing age.

Nor is this interchange of information among the artizans, and this increase of general information, the only advantage which is conferred by the well-conducted part of the weekly journals; for they not only diffuse among the people the means and the desire of reading, but they have a tendency also to withdraw them from somewhat of that dissipation to which everywhere, and more

especially in a place like London, they are so much exposed. In this respect the journals have a vast advantage over the newspapers; and the little disquisitions upon subjects connected with science, with the arts, and with literature, which they contain, have a much more wholesome influence upon the labouring classes than the political disquisitions of the newspaper editors. The newspaper, at least the disquisition part of it, does best in the alehouse: while the journal, again, is more adapted for home perusal; and the workman who, upon Saturday night lays out the price of one pot of beer in the purchase of his little journal, has a chance, not only of preventing the tone of his mind from being relaxed during the Sunday, but of actually saving upon that day the price of two pots of beer, the consumption of which would certainly add nothing either to his strength and skill in working, or to his comfort either as an individual or as a member of a family. I do not pretend to say that the circulation of any description of journals would make the labouring classes either philosophers or hermits, and probably it is not desirable that they should; those being descriptions of persons who thrive best when the majority of people are not very well informed—for the same reason, perhaps, that rotten wood and putrid fish become a sort of luminaries in a dark room,—

but it is certain, that, since the breaking down of printed information into those small portions has been introduced, those classes of society have risen a great deal in the scale both of intelligence and of morality.

I am not sure that the weekly criticisms, and the literature of the week, are calculated to have so extensive and such beneficial effects as the weekly records of inventions, discoveries, and improved modes of applying science to assist man in his labours. The journals containing this are produced by a class of persons somewhat different from those who produce the other, and the readers of them are also different. Still, however, they, in some sort or other, help to keep one's information up to the state of things; and though the weekly reviewers may not be the best-informed or the most impartial of all possible judges, yet they let one know, not only that such and such books have been published; but, by affording a specimen or two—and their interest leads them to make those specimens as long and as good as they can—they enable one to judge what books are not worth inquiring after, which is perhaps the most wholesome piece of information that can be conferred upon a voracious reader.

In point of standing, of information as to the commercial part of the literary world, of circula-

tion, and particularly of abundant quotation—especially from books published by certain houses—*The Literary Gazette* stands at the top of this class. "The Literary Gazette" is neither very wise as an oracle, nor very much to be trusted as a judge; and its connexion with the trade of book-selling is too close and too well known, for allowing of that perfect fairness which would be demanded of such a monitor. Furthermore, it has got completely established; and when a thing of its description accomplishes this, those who have the management are very apt to become indolent. But still "The Gazette" is not without its uses; and though the praise or the censure which it awards be often ludicrously at variance with the quoted evidence, yet one can always at least guess at the general nature of a book, from the character which is made and taken of it in "The Gazette."

Weekly reviews seem to have been a curious sort of articles, from Mist's Journal down to this one; and indeed, literary criticism is produced from so many motives, by so many persons, and for so many purposes, that the analysis of it would of itself form a pretty sizable, and by no means an unappropriate, Babylon. A large quantity of it is procured from or by the publishers of books, and the portion so procured always dresseth itself out in "the garments of praise." Another portion

comes from or by those who do not publish the books in question, but who publish other books; and this, again, beareth itself with "the spirit of heaviness:" in like manner—or rather in a manner not exactly like—there are favourable things, and things unfavourable, furnished by those who write or otherwise manufacture books. It would, however, be impossible to communicate all the kinds and degrees of praise and censure which enter into the practice of this curious craft: and though one had room, and also disposition to do it, it would still be doubtful whether it were in itself worth the doing; and this doubt is increased, when one considers that if the criticism in one journal be unfair, either as praising or as censuring, it is very apt to be neutralized by that of another journal. Even the critic himself seems not to have the power of concealing the fact that he writes against his own conviction. If, indeed, he happen to be a man of talent—of capacity sufficient to appreciate the subject that is before him, it is not possible that he shall write respecting it contrary to his opinion, be the influence of the prejudice or the pay under which he writes ever so strong, without continually tearing holes in the mantle by which he strives to conceal his real sentiments. The expression of opinion in writing, is like that of passion in the countenance and in the attitude: if an attempt be made

to render the sign different from the reality, there is always some wayward muscle which takes the wrong twist, or some lagging limb that remains faithful to nature. Hence he who has been in the habit of examining this description of literature can estimate with very considerable accuracy the value of what a critic says; and, just as is the case with the external assumption of passion, the mode of detection increases with the violence of that which is assumed. If the object be to praise a book which is really bad, then, as this is not only a less pleasant, but incalculably more difficult task, than the praising of a good book, the praise is so mounted upon stilts, and so stuffed and pushed out in all its dimensions, that it is easily detected. It sometimes happens, too, that the critic gratifies something of a more close and personal nature, by praising that which he knows and feels to be bad—there is less of rivalship to his own wisdom, than if it were better. When, therefore, in any matter of praise in those criticisms, one discovers such a discrepancy between the judgment and the evidence, or such flaws and inconsistencies in the judgment itself, as enables one to discover that it proceeds from different motives, and has a different object from those which ought to actuate a fair critic, then one is to consider it as being unjust in the exact ratio of its warmth. A little praise, un-

der such circumstances, and the thing praised may be passable; a little more, and it may still be tolerable; but go on, and there is always an elevation of eulogy, at which the thing eulogised may be regarded as altogether worthless.

In like manner, as it takes more praise to help a book in proportion as that book is bad, it takes more censure to hurt one in proportion as it is good; and therefore interested censure must be received and dealt with according to the same inverted process that is necessary in the case of interested praise. In this case, however, the detection is not just so easy as in the other; for censure can be assumed with a much closer imitation of truth, than approbation can be,—just in the same way that in common life, the vices, follies, and oddities of men are much more easily imitated than their virtues. Whether this greater facility with which condemnation can be counterfeited, be owing to the virtue of mankind or to their vice—whether it be more congenial to human nature, or less so, and being extrinsic—a habit as it were, and on that account more easily put on than a strong natural feeling, such as that of admiration, can be roused,—I shall not inquire; but this I can say of my own experience, and I am not singular in the saying of it, that I have often been deceived by false censure, but seldom by false praise. When, indeed, one's own self

happens to be the object either of the one or the other, that seems completely to alter the case; and not merely to alter it by a transposition of the perceptions, but by a great increase both of force and of faith to that which looks out for applause, and a corresponding diminution of that which would have to deal with censure.

When the number of new books, and of books which are not new that come forth and pass before those weekly tribunals for judgment, is considered, it must be pretty evident that no establishment which their most extended circulation could afford, would be able to pay for that careful reading and patient examination which would be necessary for enabling the critic to give learned and impartial sentence, if the whole, or even a considerable part, of those books were original. But the adaptation of machinery to the practice of modern literature, has been to the full as efficient in abbreviating the labour of the critic, as in superseding that of the author; and all that the weekly reviewer has to do, is merely to take his cue as to whether the general scope of his observations shall be laudatory or lashing, and then a judicious use of the scissars saves him the waste both of his ink and his understanding. In as far, indeed, as the weekly review is a mere appendage to the publisher, and, with "The Gazette" especially, this goes a great length, all

that is demanded is a sentence or two that can be advantageously quoted in the advertisements of the book,—as for this purpose it is found, or at least supposed, that the words "Literary Gazette" have a better sound than the words "Morning Chronicle."

The Literary Chronicle, in its matter and its manner, bears a considerable resemblance to the "Literary Gazette;" and as it is not so immediately under the control of individual booksellers as that journal, its opinions are possibly more to be depended upon: at least, I have never been able to trace in it the same vehemence of praise or of censure, when there appeared not to be much ground or necessity either for the one or the other, that I have often found in the other print. The same circumstances, however, which give less bias and prejudice to "The Literary Chronicle," give it perhaps a more limited circulation; and thus, though its voice may be more honest, it is perhaps not so loud, or so generally listened to. It must not hence be supposed that people are more foolish in their appreciation of critics than in that of any thing else; for throughout the whole fabric of society, from the parliamentary orator to him who

"Cries green hastings with an engine"

through the streets, the strongest lungs generally

command the greatest attention, and insure the most abundant success.

Those two journals are enough, and perhaps more than enough, as a specimen of the critical portion of Babylonian weekly literature. Others, somewhat different in nature, are from time to time attempted; but most of those, like many of the Sunday newspapers, take their departure before one can determine whether they are to be good or bad. The most recent, pretending, and peculiar of these is *The News of Literature and Fashion* — a journal which, in its plan, is more original, more varied, and more comprehensive than any of the rest. The greater part of it is certainly furnished by a number of persons, professing very different degrees both of ability and of opinion as to how that ability should be turned to account. One advantage it possesses over the others, in that a considerable portion of it is devoted to the public occurrences and gossip of the day. There is no doubt that this, if done with proper brevity and spirit, would be of considerable use, and might in time have a good deal of influence upon public opinion and public taste; but to render that influence salutary, more talent would be necessary, both for the furnishing of the materials, and for judging of them when furnished, than the sale of such a work could be expected to

remunerate, unless some junto of Mecænases should take it into their heads to be in this way charitable to the public,—an occurrence not very likely, and perhaps not very desirable. This journal is, however, of but short standing; and its materials are of so variegated a complexion, that it must be left to form its own character.

The fag end—and truly it is a fag end—of the weekly literature, is brought up by whole swarms of "Mirrors," and "Bees," and "Wasps," and "Spiders," and no one can tell how many oddly designated two-penny-worths and three-penny-worths of paper printed after some fashion, having,

> "The itch of picture in the front,
> With bays and wicked rhyme upon 't;"

all of which, though they have not much absolute value, and no original value whatever as literary compositions, are yet of considerable importance, not only to the makers and venders, but to that portion of the people who have neither leisure nor disposition for the perusal of large books.

One of the most remarkable circumstances connected with the weekly literature of the Babylon—and as the weekly literature is that which more immediately and properly belongs to the humble and labouring classes of society, it may be considered as indicating the changes of their tastes—is

the great difference that has taken place in its nature and form, since peace and prosperity returned to England. When war with the sword was raging abroad, and war with the tongue was hot at home —when the glory or the idleness of the army terrified strong men to risk their bones in unknown climes for unknown objects, and leave their relatives a burden upon the public; when restrictions and blockades, and armed vessels upon the sea, rendered commerce both expensive and hazardous in itself, and the drain for the public expenditure still farther diminished its returns—when those causes brought distress—and when distress, as is always the case, brought dissatisfaction,—the weekly reading of the poorer classes of society was very different from what I found it in the Babylon. In those days there were furious political pamphlets, and angry attacks upon every person who was in any way connected with the existing authorities; but now the interest of those things has gone by, and the people look for more quiet but more permanent information. The reading which was then popular, was any thing but valuable in itself, for it excited discontent, without either the desire or the capacity of removing or mitigating the grounds of discontent; but still it is by no means improbable that it had its effect, in calling forth that desire

of information, which happier times have enabled to direct itself to more valuable and desirable objects. The operation of sharpening is always a harsh one, and one which wears away part of the metal; but notwithstanding this, it always adds to the usefulness of the instrument.

CHAPTER IX.

THE JOURNALS &c.

"And as in prison mean rogues beat
Hemp for the service of the great,
So Whackum beats his dirty brains
T' advance his master's fame and gains,
And, like the devil's oracles,
Puts into doggrel rhyme his spells,
Which over every month's blank page
I' th' almanac strange bilks presage."

BUTLER.

IF it were not that the prying philosophy of these scrutinizing and inquisitive times in which our existence is cast has destroyed all the materials, both of mythology and divination, and cut us off, not only from a great deal of very delightful castle-building, but forced us to have recourse to things themselves for their own explanation, a very fine and by no means an unfair theory of the great differences between the daily and the monthly

literature of the Babylon might be founded on the mythological and horoscopical functions of the two luminaries which physically measure out, and are metaphysically supposed to rule over, those two portions of duration. Every body knows that time is divided into days by the sun, and that the moon, in like manner, portions it out into months; and in like manner also, as the sun is said to be the inspirer, the guardian, and the patron of wits, the moon takes charge of those whose imaginations have become so swift in their courses as to leave the wits behind.

Far be it from me to attempt either the building or the borrowing of such a theory,—a theory which, whatever of charm or of truth there might be in it, I have mentioned for no other purpose than to remove it out of the way, lest some friend of the day and enemy of the moon should, through fear of a visitation of the latter, make use of it to the injury of that which so little needs and could so ill bear to be injured. So far indeed is it from being the case, that those who minister to the daily papers are in their wits, and those who minister to the monthly journals out of them, that the former derive their importance, not from their own wits, nor indeed from wits of any kind, but from the dull and matter-of-fact current of events,

while the latter have little but their own wits whereupon to depend.

Whether it may have been, that when men felt or fancied themselves to be more under celestial influence than at present, the full moon was accounted the most favourable time for the gatherings of the lunation to be put into print, I shall not take upon me to determine; but monthly publication has long been a favourite practice with the small literati,—and not with these only, for the monthly magazines have always been a sort of dripping-pans to catch whatever the fire of genius might separate from the greater messes during the process of intellectual cookery; and there have been times when the foremost of England's literati have inserted their shortest, and perhaps therefore their best productions, in the monthly journals.

Of all the species of periodical literature, this seems however to be the one which, if from its nature it admits of improvement corresponding to that of society, has actually received the least of it. Compare a daily newspaper of the present day with one fifty years old, and the modern appears a giant beside the other: compare monthly magazines in like manner, and if there be any difference, the modern one is the dwarf. As records of facts—as giving any thing like a full and fair history of the month, they are a great deal worse

than their predecessors; and among the whole products of the Babylonian lunation, I have never met with a single page of record as to the events of the month, that seemed worthy either of confidence or of consultation. While the newspapers have superseded them in this department, the Minerva Press —that press which works up into amusement for idle young women the overflowings of the brains of idle old women, at the rate of some threepence-halfpenny a-page—has spoiled them of another and a favourite, if not a chosen, portion of their heritage: they do not now, as formerly, get bundles of sentimental tales and strange romances sent to the office post-paid, from which they can cull a few leaves to eke out the portion which the ever-exhausting brains of the conductor were able to bring together. The weekly periodicals have despoiled them in another quarter: they anticipate them in notices and extracts of books, and also in giving circulation to those marvellous discoveries and tales of which the monthly journals used to be the regular vehicles. Antiquarianism, too, has lost a good many of its charms; and people, especially in the metropolis, have become so anxious about new schemes and new fashions, that they can with difficulty be persuaded to read the history of an old wall, or look at the effigies of an old castle. In consequence, indeed, of the industry with which

their predecessors have ransacked and exhausted the past, and of the assiduity with which their more alert contemporaries monopolize the present, and their own apparent incapacity for seeing very far into the future, the monthly matter-of-fact men have been thrown more exclusively upon the resources of their own wits than any other class of editors; and, in the case of wits as well as in that of more substantial stores, they who have to depend most constantly upon them, of course arrive at the end of them the soonest.

In consequence of this, the monthly journals have become a sort of barriers set up a good way onward in the road to oblivion, in order to prevent, if possible, the absolute loss of a few things which nobody else appears to care very much about preserving; and indeed there are few who see them, unless it be those who are anxious to continue as well the sets of books as the sets of families that were founded by their sires and grandsires. Besides these ancient gentlemen, there are others which deal in mathematics and millinery, and spread their nets in order to catch a few of those scattered leaves of poetry which are too small and too withered for fetching any price in the market; but these, like the former, have little connexion with and as little influence upon the intelligence and taste of the age, and therefore they form no

part of the Babylonian literature, as expressive of the modes of life, or of the mode of thinking, or of the mode of want of thought, which change with the changing times and seasons of Babylon.

Among the journals which are under the domination of the moon, there are some which profess to devote their attention to medicine; and in so far as these confine themselves to a faithful record of symptoms and modes of treatment in medical and surgical cases, (and nowhere can skilful and industrious editors have more facilities for acquiring these than in London,) they may be exceedingly useful to those whose business it is to carve and cure the human body. But the medical profession treats of subjects which have few attractions for general readers; the slang in which its professors see meet to wrap it up completely out-Babylons Babylon, and when those learned persons leave the application of their pills and their poultices, and begin to dispute whether these should or should not be exhibited, they very frequently become unintelligible to each other, and so it is not to be expected that the public shall understand them, or even make any attempt in that way.

Indeed, the only two Babylonian monthly journals which profess to belong to the public generally, and connect themselves with the passing times, are *The London* and *The New Monthly Ma-*

gazines; and these two, although each has its range rather in its own little corner than over the whole field, and though both be and are perhaps intended to be more pretty than profound, may still be taken as very fair specimens of the kind of talent which drudges and labours in ordinary for the laudable purpose of Babylonian amusement. "The London" affects to depend upon a sort of learning which conveys little information, a kind of philosophy which is most lamentably deficient both in principles and in results, and a sort of sentiment and feeling withal so soft and so sickly, that it is continually playing upon the edge of downright babyism. It blesses the world with restorations of scraps of the oldest and the worst rhyme that ever was dribbled out in that most unpoetical of all countries, France; and this it intersperses with lumps of the philosophy of Leipsic, of which not even Kant himself could determine the nature or find out the use. Sometimes, indeed, it presents us with an article of a better description; but anon, as conscious of having done that which it ought not to do, it returns to its sickly sentiment and its nursery rhymes, and leaves one utterly at a loss as to which of the three sexes minister to its magnitude.

"The New Monthly" is better and worse than "The London:" it is better in as far forth as its no-

minal editor is a man, who in his time has done noble service, both to the cause of song and the cause of liberty; and who, though he has now laid his more glorious Muse upon the shelf, continues to receive admiration in consequence of the deeds of his former days. Campbell is perhaps the only man now living in England, to whom the bright vision of the very summit of Parnassus has ever been unfolded: in his former writings, there is a loftiness of sentiment and purity of heart, a glow of tenderness and a glory of colouring, that seldom, indeed, have been equalled; and if the endurance of his powers had been in any way commensurate to their value, Campbell would have been the poetic boast of his age, as well for the number as for the value of his productions. But poets, like poetry itself, are wayward things, and must be left wholly to their own courses. If the notes of song are to be true to nature, and to thrill into the hearts of all mankind, not only without effort, but without desire upon their part, then they must be left to take precisely their own course: for if he who has written ever so admirably at one time, be compelled to write at all times, the chance is, that that which he produces shall be a perfect failure; and if a bard once fall from the vigour of his strain, there seems to be no return,—an erring poet, like an erring female, is lost, and for ever. It seems curious too, that

some of the greatest of our poets are, like the wound of the stage hero, "great because they are so small;" and that those whose emanations have the bright and the piercing qualities of the lightning, resemble also the lightning in the brevity of their duration. Gray belongs to this class, and stands, and perhaps will stand for ever, at the head of it; and there is more poetry—absolutely more painting—a farther and a fairer glimpse into nature, in one of Gray's images, than in half-a-dozen volumes of the ordinary verse-men. Campbell, if not the very next to Gray, is exceedingly near him; and therefore, like Gray, Campbell could be expected to write very little. It must not be supposed, however, that if poets of this description put forth a small number of lines, they are on that account more indolent than they who come down upon us in all the breadth, all the brawling, and all the frequency of mountain-torrents. It would be easy to point out scores of volumes, and volumes too that continue to be read, upon which there has not only not been so much intellect to expend in the same compass, but upon which there has not been any thing like so much intellect expended altogether, as there has been upon some of Campbell's odes, which extend only to a few stanzas; or upon some passages in the Pleasures of Hope, none of which exceed above one or two pages. If man-

kind will have this more intellectual and elaborate poetry, they must be content to take it in such small quantities as the powers even of the first of men are able to furnish; if you would be contented with a paving-stone, you may have it as large as artificial machinery and brute force are able to move from the quarry; but if you look for a diamond, you must be contented with that which, in physical magnitude, is comparatively nothing.—Campbell, instead of having—as is said by those who feel no difficulty in their own writings (and how should they?)—written too little, has probably written too much; and when his shorter poems are compared with his longer ones, perfectly delightful as some parts, indeed many parts, of the latter are, one cannot help wishing that the whole of them had been short. And Campbell is "Editor of The New Monthly Magazine!"—a combination which, in the ears of those who are not wise, soundeth well; but which in reality is about as incongruous as though Apollo himself had been articled to a tallow-chandler, and bound by his indenture to leave off his own shining, in order to further the sale of farthing rushlights. One would have determined *à priori* that such a combination could never answer—that a man gifted and minded like Campbell could not submit to tend the herd of a lunarian vender of little essays; and the fact has borne out the predic-

tion; for instead of "The New Monthly Magazine" having received and profited by any of the intellectual fire of Campbell, it seems, from what he avowedly writes for it, to take most of the intellectuality out of himself, whenever he comes in contact with it. The truth is, that it was never intended that the spirit of the editor should inspire, or even influence, this journal. Very probably all that was wanted was merely his name for a sign-post,—as a something which would lead those not acquainted with the matter to suppose, that a publication so presided over would be better than the rival publications, in order that, under cover of this, those immediately concerned in it might be able to make it worse. Whether it be worse or not, it would not be very fair, and indeed not very easy, to say; for among the various forms of this section of the Babylonian literature, one so seldom has occasion for the word "better," that one hardly knows how, when, or where to use it.

If it be true that those monthly exhibitions are a type of the more permanent literature of the times, then that literature, like the differences of the several ranks of society, must have become much smaller than it was heretofore: for really, if the wisdom and sentiment of the "London," and the gaiety and wit of the "New Monthly", are exactly correspondent to those of the age which produces

them, that age must contain no intermediate state between babyism and dotage; and ere folks have well ceased from "mewling and puking in the nurse's arms," they become "silly sooth, and dally with the innocence of love, like the old age." I do not mean to say that there is not something in the printed lines which these monthly couriers to oblivion lay before their readers; they are often very prettily written, "as sweet as doves' eyes, and as sharp as bodkins:" neither do I mean to contend that there is not in them that, which they who dabble therein are pleased to call fine writing. What I complain of is, that they write too well,—so completely exhaust both the subject and their own understandings, that they leave little scope for the judgment, and none at all for the imagination, of the reader.

Another thing—their wit, their humour, their feelings, their perceptions, their illustrations—every thing about them—belong not to the grand volume of nature, nor even to the second-rate volume of general society; but are all confined to the few tiny leaves over which their own eyes have had faculty and permission to range. The eye of the intellect in this resembles the eye of the body,—that in proportion as it has the power of magnifying small things, and thereby more perfectly discerning their beauties and their deformities, its power to take in large objects, and range over extensive

views, becomes diminished. As he whose natural vision can discern every little mark and spot upon the tiny flower of the garden, which is vulgarly termed "London pride," cannot be expected, even although elevation were given him, to scan the horizon stretching but ten miles round; so he whose intellectual or literary eye has turned upon, and can see and appreciate all the little marks and spots upon that tiny social plant (flower or weed, according as it is thought of), which may also, without much vulgarity, be denominated London pride, has no range of speculation that can at all grapple with the more general, the mightier, and the more permanent attributes and elements of human society, or so connect them with that which is more enduring than man, as that they shall even have a chance of being permanent.

If any one would write for immortality, the materials upon which he works must in so far be immortal. Now, the very value of those things which are most interesting for idlers to do and drivellers to write about in the Great Babylon, consists in the brevity of their duration. There is no stamina, no gratification, in the things essentially, and therefore the whole of the pleasure derived from them is derived from their novelty; and novelty is a quality of so fading a nature, that even excellence itself is inadequate to the

preservation of it. But the Babylonian writers,—and from all that I have examined and heard upon the subject, I am inclined to believe that the two Magazines whose names I have last quoted are the two sluices which let the soft waters of genuine Babylonian lore dribble into the lake of oblivion, so as to admit a new supply to come forth, and thus preserve the colliquative runnel, "*in omne volubilis ævum*," —are continually straining after this home novelty —hunting the butterflies, or chasing the dust of the day; and will not, or cannot, so much as lift their little eyes to the contemplation of those enduring things, which were old ere the fashions and the fooleries of the Babylon came into existence, but which shall be strong and vigorous after no memorial of those fashions and those fooleries can be found.

There are features of nature, there are principles in man, and there are modes in society, upon which if a writer could but fasten himself, no whirlwind of change, no storm of accident, and not even the flood of time itself, could sweep him away; but these are, perchance, not attainable by those whose preparations for working, as well as whose work itself, have been performed by the streams of Babel. To look upon the Thames itself, with its current of small particles speeding on and on to the ocean, without pause, without change, and without visi-

ble return, communicates nearly the same knowledge, and imparts nearly the same taste for permanence of duration, as is given by a whole lifetime spent in the contemplation of that casually fleeting current of customs, of fashions, and of men, which, upon its banks, flows onward to civil and to moral oblivion. Farther, when one looks upon running water, one is very apt to become giddy, and the certainty and the severity of the giddiness are ever in proportion to the swiftness of the current: in like manner, when one contemplates, not the fixed form, but the perpetual fluctuations, of society, it is scarcely possible to avoid a considerable degree of intellectual staggering, and especially that kind of optical deception, by which, when the observing power has become tremulous, it imagines that all else trembles, and that itself stands still.

In consequence, if not of these causes, at least of some cause or other, which prevents them from seeing the strong points of that which is fleeting, seizing the general qualities of that which is mixed, and laying hold of the durable parts of that which is only partially imperishable, the true Babylonian writers—those who make it their labour to knead the clay of their understanding into monthly bricks, daub these bricks afterwards with mortar, build them up into little books, of perchance some-

thing less than monthly duration, and stucco those over with titles, and prefaces, and puffs—look for, or at least see, only those qualities of men and of things that are exposed upon that filmy surface, which it pleases that favourite daughter of Chance —Fashion, sole arbitress of Babylon taste, to turn up for their inspection and admiration.

In consequence of those circumstances, it seems exceedingly doubtful whether there be a greater degree of general and permanent interest in those newly-modelled journals of the Babylon, than there was in the older ones, to which the provincial literati, when the love of writing overcame them, sent up their carriage-paid contributions. In point of literary form, I will grant that they are superior, but I have my doubts as to whether they may not be inferior in value, and more especially in variety of matter; for though I am very willing to admit that, in as far as the mere workmanship is concerned, a town-made magazine may be as superior as a town-made razor, yet I have my doubts as to whether these be not "Birmingham" in the stuff, and "London particular" only in the form and the polish. If, indeed, the same limited number of individuals,—individuals too, who, if they were any way remarkable either for their intellectual powers or their intellectual cultivation, can hardly be supposed to take to this vocation as a trade,—shall con-

tinue year after year to furnish the same quantity of fragments, chipped off from their own wits; it is scarcely within the compass of the most wide and charitable postulate to concede the impossibility, or even the improbability, of their becoming so exhausted in thinking, and so hackneyed in expression, as that they shall not only find no new matter to advance, but also no new form in which they can advance it.

Any one who is so gratuitously good-natured as to have no apprehension that continual exhaustion—an exhaustion of that which at first may not happen to be very great, will produce this effect, may turn to the sentiment in "The London,"—or the sketches of any thing, say of —— characters in "The New Monthly," and the experiment will have more force than though I or any one else were to throw away a whole chapter in attempting to demonstrate the truism. No doubt there is one circumstance which renders this exhaustion less a matter of loss to the thing exhausted, and of surfeit to them upon whom it exhausts itself, than though there were only one arena for the setting forth of such displays: when any of the persons thus employed wears himself out under one employer, he can turn to another, and revolve anew through all the signs of the same circle; and as the readers of the different journals (perhaps I should say the buyers of them) are not

the same persons, that which would be repetition in the one, makes very good original matter in the other. Indeed, if the series extended over a month or two, it would not signify much, although the readers were exactly the same—inasmuch as that which a man has entirely forgotten, is as original to him as that which he never heard of. The writers of whom I speak are well aware both of the value and the safety of this mode of procedure; and they sometimes carry it so far as that, after having run the round of some half dozen of other publications, and been, of course, original in them all, it returns at last to the one in which it first made its appearance, and becomes a second time original there. Perhaps it does so according to the general law of terrestrial substance, which forms the grass that fattens the sheep, that feeds the man, that fattens the worm, that again forms the grass, and so on in perpetual circle: but this is a point of very nice and not very necessary philosophy. It is much more important to know that if a very silly matter does not contain so much originality in the original invention or discovery, as a matter of more importance, yet it may contain much more in the end,—seeing that by being often forgotten, and as often re-imagined or re-discovered, its value as original may be multiplied till it exceed any fixed quantity of originality that imagination can invent, or indus-

try find out. Here, again, is a close analogy to life: the small ephemeral insects, which live for their days or their half days, possess not in their little frames, or their limited duration, either so much of the energy or the endurance of the living principle, as the larger and longer-lived animals; but the frequency of their recurrence may throw the excess of the total into their scale of the balance. It is just the same with the journals of which I am speaking. In the individual number, they have little originality or little life; but then in their successive publications, and re-productions, and re-discoveries of the same fine and filmy ideas, the total, after the lapse of a number of months, amounts to a goodly something,—a something for which mankind, especially amid the mutabilities of Babylon, ought to be very thankful, inasmuch as they have it fresh and new at the time, and it neither racks their understandings nor burdens their memories.

But whatever effect this putting of monthly periodical literature upon the mercenary footing of a standing army, instead of trusting it to those volunteers and militia of the pen who fell so severely under the censure of Dr. Young, may have had upon the literature itself, there can be no doubt of its advantages to the literati themselves; for in consequence of this monthly labour, which, I

believe, is upon the whole decently paid, those upon whom chance or fortune will not bestow a more prolonged smile, and who will not return o the professions of their fathers, are not doomed to unite their sweet voices in one grand chorus to sing the gallows as heretofore, and depend upon casual pence in the street, like those minstrels of whom they may be regarded as the descendants. This is in itself a great advantage; and though it may, in some instances, serve no better purpose than that of keeping a dunce out of the parish workhouse, yet there are others in which it must save those who are deserving of a better fate from the visitation of a worse one. Indeed the great improvement of literature, as it respects the comfort of literary men,—and that is no small part of its value, inasmuch as if they who produce be in misery, that which is produced stands a great chance, at least, of being miserable,—is, that it has now become a regular profession—a trade in which men do their weekly work, and receive their weekly wages, with the same certainty and the same regularity as other tradesmen, instead of being, as they once were, danglers upon the bounty of booby lords, or dependants upon the caprice of ever-varying taste.

No doubt the majority of those who, being thus regularly employed, may be considered as com-

posing the literary profession, are men of no great eminence in themselves, and vastly inferior to those intellectual giants who forced their way to eminence through all the difficulties and disadvantages of a less liberal state of things; but still, comparing those who form this class with those who form any other class of society, I do not think that they will be found inferior; and if the task which they impose upon themselves be a little more difficult, and also a little more exposed to observation and criticism, than the more occult vocations of the other three divisions of what is called the learned world, who plead and physic men into the loss of their purses and their health, and preach them into the saving of their souls, then the men themselves ought not to be blamed for having chosen a profession of which the public are better able to judge, and in which they, perchance, take a deeper interest. As to inferiority among the members of this class compared with each other, it may safely be said, that the majority of every class of society are plodding and every-day sort of characters; that, in proportion as the class becomes more numerous and more regularly established, the majority of its members become more plodding and more every-day; and that, above all things, the world ceases to marvel at, and to magnify to giants, the geniuses, the works, and the writings of men, just in proportion as those

works and writings become better understood. So long as it demanded a combination of great talents, fortunate circumstances, an imposing subject, and an influential patron to prevent the words "literary man," from being synonimous with the word "beggar," it was but natural to suppose that those who did come into notice would remain in it; but even they appeared the greater, and remained the longer, in consequence of the time, and the efforts that were necessary in order to make a comparatively ill-educated public acquainted with them: but now that the literary talents form part of the public wealth of the country, as well as those talents which are engaged in furnishing the other necessaries and ornaments of life, the fame of literary men has abated, and their reward has been increased,—they have sustained somewhat of loss in the matter of "empty praise," but that has been far more than made up to the country, and especially to themselves, in the addition which has been made to the quantity of "solid pudding."

In thus reflecting upon the advantageous change which a more extended diffusion of knowledge and of liberal principle throughout the British islands, (and, in as far as British example and British influence either at first or at second band extends, throughout the world,) I had nearly lost sight of

the remaining mould into which the metal of Babylonian literature is poured, and as nearly occupied the space which I intended to devote to it. It will not, however, detain me long, as the difference between the quarterly journals and the mass of the other journals and newspapers is a difference in manner, much more than a difference in matter. Fashion indeed wills it that the quarterly journals shall, in general, (with the exception of those scientific chronicles, of which I have already said enough,) take the form of literary reviews, and, under the pretext of discussing books and their authors, actually re-discuss, and that generally not for the elucidation of truth, but for the furtherance of some party purpose, those topics of the time which have been again and again discussed during the currency of the three months, at the close of which the quarterly journal brings them into judgment, and thereby adds another to the manifold originalities of the same idea.

That species of reviewing, or rather of writing called reviewing, which forms the distinguishing and most valuable feature of the quarterly journals, is not, strictly speaking, of Babylonian origin. "The Edinburgh Review" set the example of writing a series of essays in favour of a particular view of political, philosophical, and literary questions, under cover of a certain number of what

might be considered as the most popular publications of the time. The thought was a happy one; for in consequence of the novelty of the book, and the expectation of getting a short road to all its contents, as well as to all the gossip that could be discovered respecting its author, readers were attracted, and read, and haply profited by the reading, those essays and disquisitions which would have been very indifferent, if not altogether repulsive, if they had had no signboard more tempting than their own appropriate titles.

It is not a little curious with what nicety chance, if indeed it be the work of chance, has apportioned out those quarterly political batteries, which are so masked as to have the external appearance of critical journals, to the Modern Athens and the Great Babylon. The three leading ones take each a side of the political triangle: *The Westminster*, as a Radical Journal, very properly takes the base; the *Athenian* or Whig Journal assumes to itself the perpendicular; and the *Quarterly* takes the slanting side, which is the longest, and has the surface which it represents equal to both the surfaces represented by the other two.

In speaking of "The Quarterly Review" it is not necessary formally to inquire into its origin, although the one usually assigned to it was a quarrel between its proprietor and the proprietor of

"The Edinburgh Review," in which the other had previously held a share. The causes by which literary works, whether of a single publication or successive publications, are produced, have never yet been made matter of philosophic inquiry,—although such an inquiry would be very pleasant, and by no means unprofitable. It would be difficult, however, and demand from literary men in general a series of confessions as long, and somewhat more to be depended upon, than those of Rousseau and Lackington. But leaving the philosophy of the origin of books to those who might be more profitably employed there-anent than in their present labours, I may state that when "The Quarterly" first made its appearance, the Athenian journal was so strong, so vigorous, and had so powerful a hold upon the feelings and the faith of mankind, that "The Quarterly" had no chance of success but by taking, upon all questions of public interest, the side opposite to that espoused by its rival. "The Quarterly" did this; and as the side which it espoused was either not so well versed in the principles by which it was actuated, or so well able to explain and defend those principles as it has been subsequently, "The Quarterly" began with a system of politics which was (unavoidably at the time) a little dark and dogmatical; and, getting accustomed to that, it has not, to this day, been able to

come forth to the light even of that Tory party whose conduct it has seen meet to defend, from necessity perchance at first, and subsequently, it may be, partly from interest and partly from habit. Those who first joined in the literary labours of "The Quarterly," and remain, except where death or decrepitude has weeded them away, were men of more erudition than understanding—deeply read in the mysteries of books, but, with a very few exceptions, shallow and superficial in those of nature and of man. They were withal excellent linguists, and far more zealous in discovering cracks in the head of Priscian than in feeling the deficiencies of their own; they trudged over the globe like so many wandering Jews, and loaded their memories and their pages with geographical details, although at the same time they gave evidence that they were somewhat deficient in those branches of natural and of social philosophy which alone can give to those details their proper degree of interest and utility; and in matters of imagination, taste, and poetry, they in part belonged to a sect which was not popular then, and which does not seem calculated for increasing, or at any rate does not increase, in popularity. In respect of what may be called learned and fine writing, the men of "The Quarterly" certainly had many degrees the advantage of their northern rivals, even

when the Athenian journal was in the zenith of its power; but it is equally true that, then at least, they were many, very many degrees, behind those Septentrional sages, if not in the soundness of their philosophy, at least in their skill in the management of it.

"The Quarterly" had another difficulty to contend with: its contributors were drawn from among two bodies of men, who, though they had at least come to an understanding that they would equally support the same class of political opinions, or rather political persons—namely, those in power, were yet in every thing else as nearly the antipodes of each other as it was possible to conceive of men born and educated in the same age and country. One part of them had been, even from their youth, brought up at the feet of the High-church Gamaliel; and if they were not thoroughly imbued with the doctrines of passive obedience and the Divine right, had yet been pretty well and pretty regularly immersed in those stubborn and unyielding waters. In consequence of this, they were strongly attached not only to all the existing institutions in Church and in State, but to all the long-established schools, and rules, and formulæ, in every department of learning. I do not say that, in their estimation, Aristotle was omniscient and infallible; but the principles of their philosophy, and the

models of their taste, as well as their opinions upon laws and governments, were all such as had been consecrated by the lapse of years, and owed, in some instances at least, the veneration in which they were held more to authority and usage, than to any demonstrated superiority in their own intrinsic nature. The other part consisted of men who, at least at one period of their lives, had scorned the sacredness of antiquity and the laws of institution and of habit—had not only scouted those differences of rank in society which the others revered, and hinted that a human origin, sometimes none of the justest, might be found for that which the others regarded as Divine,—but had been the founders of their own schools of poetry and taste; and in the founding of them, and much more in the practice after they were founded, broken one and all of what the other party regarded as the sacred canons in those matters.

A combination so heterogeneous in many of its elements, could not be supposed to remain undissolved unless by the power of some individual or conventional fence much stronger than its own disposing affinities; and though the success of the Review induced others to contribute to it who were not so violently wedded either to the one or to the other of those sides of the dogma, it could hardly be supposed, that in the event of the tie

which held them together being loosened, and any preponderance given—especially to the eccentric element, that those more liberal and more rational auxiliaries would remain. The recent loss of the original editor, upon whose personal acumen more of the value of "The Quarterly Review" depended, and more of the unity among its contributors hinged, than many were aware of, has, as I understand, brought it somewhat down from the eminence which it has so long held; and though this circumstance will have any effect but that of diminishing its orthodoxy upon some points, it is said to be calculated to make it infinitely more heterodox upon others,—so much so, indeed, that as the continuation of peace gradually diminishes the political portion of the Review, its fame will have to rest upon that part of its base which is the least able to support it.

"The Westminster Review" is neither so learned nor so orderly in its words as "The Quarterly;" while in philosophy it wanders as the one party of "The Quarterly" would have wandered in taste, had not their aberrations been restrained by the other. The politics of "The Westminster" are of that description which answer far better for argument than for use. They are nearly the same with those which, behind the scenes, govern the meetings in Covent Garden, unless when the disturbing force of a

Hunt or a Cobbett gives proof as to how slender a thing such government is. They emanate from that school which believes that every thing is to be accomplished by what it is pleased to call, perfection of system; and which would require all those by whom the systems are framed, to be infinitely wiser than ever yet could be predicated of human nature. Its members have never been able to make any figure either in the thinking or in the acting world; but they are persons far gone in that most hopeless of all amativeness—the love of themselves, and, like other doating lovers, they wander through shady groves and by shallow streams, and carefully avoid all knowledge of the human race. If ever it should become necessary to have a system of political philosophy, no part of which were to be allowed to come into use, then "The Westminster" philosophers, whether in their character of reviewers, (I mean essay writers,) or in their more assuming one as manufacturers of systems, would be the very men to furnish such a commodity; but until such a want and such a means of supplying it become matters of general desire, the fragments of their wisdom will probably be allowed to lie in the same obscurity as the blocks from which they are hewn. In matters of literary and social interest, "The Westminster Review" contains not much to atone for the inapplicability of its philo-

sophy: its notions are sometimes acute enough; but they all smell of the cloister; and it is withal so dogmatical in the asserting of them, and so brief and vehement in its condemnation of every other one, that, even although the opinions were really better in themselves, folks would hardly consent to be whipped into them at its furious and intemperate rate.

Indeed, although with those two Babylonian three-monthers, and the addition of the Athenian one, which is at variance with the two in like manner as they are at variance with each other, there be no lack of a quarterly publication to set forth the politics of those three parties, and the several systems and views of men and things which they are wont to couple with their philosophy, yet it may be that there is still wanting a quarterly journal which shall be worthy of the age, devote itself to the record and the furtherance of its advances, and deal with every person and every subject in a manner perfectly fair and impartial.

Such a journal is probably, however, to be desired rather than to be expected; for as each of those which I have enumerated depends more upon its partizanship than upon its general character, and probably aims more at doing service to its patrons than in doing service to the general interests of literature, and as those which are de-

voted to science, devote themselves not so much to the furtherance of science generally, as to the furtherance of the scientific fame of those persons with whom they are more immediately and intimately connected, it is possible that the world generally does not hold a work of this kind in such estimation as to support it without the aid of some specific prop. This, however, is a matter upon which it would be extremely difficult to procure accurate information, and upon which no speculation could be of the smallest value; I shall, therefore, pursue it no farther: and, indeed, some may think that the number of pages I have already devoted to the different forms and productions of the Babylonian press, are more than enough; but my plea in mitigation is, that this same press is, of all subjects, whether in the Babylon or elsewhere, the most important; and that, from what cause I know not, the accounts of it are less perfect and less appropriate, than those of any thing with which I am acquainted. Very possibly, I have added nothing to the knowledge of this wonderful subject; but I have added something to the quantity of printed paper concerning it, and that is as much as the majority of us authors can say of the majority of subjects about which we write.

CHAPTER X.

BABYLONIAN LAW.

Ἐξ ἔργων νόμου οὐ δικαιωθήσεται πᾶσα σὰρξ.

ΠΑΥΛ. πρὸς ΡΩΜ.

ALTHOUGH it cannot be said that lawyers are the chief men, and law the chief business of the Great Babylon, yet there is no lack either of the one or of the other. If a meridian line were to be drawn nearly through its centre, that line would with few exceptions fall upon the localities of Courts and Lawyers, and those who were under protection of law, endeavouring to escape from justice; or those who, in consequence of the infliction of the law, were expiating their offences. At the centre of this line there would be the Court of Chancery, in Lincoln's Inn Hall—that point which is as fixed in its position, and as memorable, and as immutable, as the centre of gravity itself; the southern extremity would rest upon the King's Bench prison, with its surrounding rules, (as they are oddly enough called,) while its termination towards the

cold and chilling north would fall upon the House of Correction, or as haply it might with more propriety be termed, the House of Corruption, in Cold-bath Fields. If, again, this line were to be crossed by another, lying eastward and westward, and passing through the immovable centre of the former, the western half of it would terminate among the wigs and wranglers in Westminster Hall, and the eastern one would proceed by Newgate and the gallows, through Guildhall and the Courts held thereat, to the gloomy abode of the unfortunate in Whitecross Street.

Physically speaking, therefore, the Babylonian law takes up the form of a cross; and, morally speaking, those who come in contact with it in any other way than by taking a share in its application, and receiving a share in the rewards of the same, find it cross in good earnest.

England boasts that she is governed, not by the despotism of one man, not by the oligarchy of a number of men, and not by the anarchy of all men, but by laws: and certainly, whatever may be the intrinsic worth of the boast, no one can deny that, what with "general customs," "particular customs," "certain particular customs," "statutes enacted," "statutes amended," discretionary powers of magistrates and judges, patent rights, prescriptive rights, privileges of the Church, powers of the

Church, and a thousand other things, the names of which would demand twelve calendar months for the recital, there is as much of the materials of order in England as would confuse, not any one head merely, but all the heads in the world; and, therefore, for any man to attempt, by any quantity of printed paper that he could put forth, to give any thing like a correct analysis of this most extra-Babylonish of all Babylonian matters, would be a task of pretty nearly the same difficulty, and extending to pretty nearly the same length, as though one were to attempt writing the private memoirs, and estimating the characters of the whole inhabitants within the horizon which displays itself to a spectator upon the cross of St. Paul's. The whole laws of England—in the endless variety of what is common, and what is statute, and how the two beget between them a sort of hybrid, which is neither the one nor the other,—in those precedents, and opinions, and judgments, which, being slipt off, grow into little supplementary laws,—in the formal routine of an almost endless variety of courts,—and in the quirks and doublings by which the law may be kept whole and justice broken—form, perhaps, one of the most extraordinary fabrics that ever was put together by the invention of inventors, and the consent of consenters. Well may England venerate this mighty fabric! for, besides its power, and

its utility in the details, it has at least some of the attributes of divinity,—it is incomprehensible, and it is without end.

It is somewhat singular, that that nation which is most remarkable for clearness both in its words and its actions upon every other subject, should have the most mysterious and complicated system of laws,—a system which, though it expresses pretty plainly what are the cases in which, if the last and noblest prerogative of the Monarch interfere not, an Englishman may calculate with great certainty that he shall be hanged, yet leaves him in very great doubt as to how he may protect his property when he has it, recover it when he intrusts it to another, or leave it to his family when he dies.

That Englishmen of all ranks should all along have had great respect for their laws and legal institutions, is a very commendable matter in itself; but it is extremely doubtful whether this may not, in part, be the cause why so much darkness and confusion have crept into what ought to be the simplest to be known, and the easiest to be executed, of all human contrivances. Other matters, along with the power of acquisition have the power of destruction, and when they assume a new form they put off the old one; but it seems a peculiar quality of laws, and of the laws of England in an

especial manner, that they take every new impression which the necessity or genius of passing times stamps upon them, and at the same time retain the whole, or nearly the whole, of the old ones. To call the fabric of English legislation and laws, written and oral, the lumber-house of ages, would not only be very uncivil, but very improper; because, even when a law becomes not merely useless and negative, but a positive impediment in the way of improvement—as laws are every day becoming, it is no more to be considered as lumber than a man's father is to be considered as lumber compared with himself. Ungrateful sons do sometimes indeed entertain such an opinion as this; and, when they join heedlessness to ingratitude, they are very apt to declare it. They never do this, however, except when the parent stands between them and an inheritance; and, therefore, as an old statute has nothing to bequeath to a new one, there is no reason why it should be considered as a barrier in the way. Still, however, considering the long succession of years and of ages through which wisdom has been fatiguing itself, and sometimes almost wasting itself to folly, in the manufacture of those laws, and considering also that legislative wisdom, if not worked beyond this barrier, always preserves some sort of congruity with the opinions and customs of the times,—it can easily be

supposed that a fabric which has taken part of its form from so many ages, and so many races of men, can have no unity of design, and therefore no connexion and no beauty as a whole, even admitting that it were perfect in all the individual parts. Suppose but for a moment that the present religion of England, as by law established, were to be composed of all the creeds and all the ceremonies which have been believed and performed in England, from the first arch-druid (if such there were) who immolated his human victim upon the sacred *cromlech* at Stonehenge, to the Right Reverend Father in God his Grace the present Archbishop of Canterbury who anoints our most Gracious Kings and governs the holy Church militant in all the meekness and purity of the Christian faith, what a singular cluster of contradictions, what an odd bundle of incongruities, it would make! Here would stand the bearded ancient, besmeared with ashes and blood, seeking to appease his savage gods by the groans of suffering and expiring men; and there the mitred modern would preach peace upon earth, a deliverance both from guilt and from suffering, and weep for even those casual infirmities of human nature, which no kindliness of human intention could prevent. In one place we should have the King himself kneeling to be scourged at the shrine of the holy St. Thomas; and in

another, the bluff King Harry snatching the tiara from the head of the Apostolic Vicar, the holy and accredited successor of Peter the Apostle, and clapping it upon his own temporal though kingly brows. Here again, we should have the holy magician St. Dunstan taking the nose of the grand enemy of human kind, and squeezing it in his burning forceps, till the captive fiend bellowed again round all the forge and bargained for his liberty, by binding himself not to tempt an Englishman, and especially an English churchman, during the life of the holy Dunstan; and there we should have human reason shaking hands with religious faith, proclaiming the other spectacle a gross and unfounded imposition, and rating the pious saint as nothing better than a mountebank, and impostor of the very lowest description. We should mock at all these, or rather, grasping the present as our own, and glorying in its superior accordance with right reason, with pure feeling and with virtuous conduct, we should spurn the rest: but while we cleave to the present in our religion, in our laws we cling equally to the past.

Suppose, again, that when it pleases our Sovereign Lord the King to hold a levee or a drawing-room, it should strike the lords and the ladies of the Court to deck themselves out in all the va-

rieties of costume, from the days in which British beaux and British belles sought no further garnishing than the painting of their own skins, down to the newest cape of a coat and flounce of a petticoat that have been introduced, what a queer assembly it would make! and how difficult it would be for George the Fourth, in spite of all his sense of decorum, all his consciousness of dignity, and all his feelings of politeness, to prevent himself, not merely from shaking his royal sides with plebeian glee, but from issuing his royal mandate, that his under Secretary of State should have all the nondescripts and oddities consigned over to him, in order that he might constrain them to dwell in sure ward with Mrs. Margaret Nicholson in the New Bethlehem, St. George's Fields: but though this be a matter of dress, and law be a matter of dressing, we preserve and cherish those antiquated portions of the one, which would move to laughter even the solemnity of a King if they were preserved in the other.

I willingly admit, that, even without any overweening prejudice or fondness for the past, there is nothing so difficult in itself as to keep legislation as far advanced as society. Society has the living and the progressive principles in itself; and if cruelty and oppression do not turn it retrograde,

it will keep advancing. Law, on the other hand, is a thing which, in itself, is dead and inert; its very excellence consists in the impossibility of moving it out of its original position; and therefore it is absolutely impossible that it should keep pace with the self-moving machine of society.

In practice, too, the law of England is said to do very well; and to do especially well in those cases where, like the grave-digger's gallows, it does well "for them that do ill:" but when one comes to make an attempt at understanding it, and much more at explaining it to others, then one finds that it would be a much smaller sacrifice of labour—and in some possible cases not a much greater sacrifice of virtue, to enable it to bring one to the grave-digger's application, than to bring it to any thing like an understandable shape. But if the accomplishment of this would be a hopeless task, even to those who have long and laboriously devoted themselves to the subject, and who are able and willing to expend volume after volume upon it, how much more would it be presumptuous in me to grapple with the theory of it, or even to attempt depicting the practice!

One thing, however, I cannot help remarking: that the law of England, with all its excellencies, and notwithstanding the number of ages that have

had their wisdom at work upon it, is a much more efficient engine for the infliction of punishment, than for the preservation, and especially for the recovery, of rights. In Babylon, in an especial manner, its movements are so cumbrous and so expensive, the tricks and shufflings of its lower and more worthless dependants are so many and so inexplicable, and the good which it is calculated to do is so much counteracted by the trouble and expense of doing it, that unless a man has not only a great deal at stake, but a great deal more to stake for it, he had much better let this paragon of institutions alone.

Suppose, for instance, a tradesman has a debtor who owes him a small sum, the which sum the creditor is unable to get paid. There must be one of two reasons for this non-payment: either the debtor is in the mean time unable to pay, because he is a poor man, or he is unwilling to pay, because he is not honest. In either case, the creditor brings his action. If the debtor be poor and honest, he does not, of course, employ lawyers to defend the case for him, because his honesty renders it improbable that he would have recourse to the law, in order that it might help him to do injustice; and his poverty renders it impossible, because, without money, not a wheel of the law will move. Notwithstanding this non-opposition

of the debtor, or even an admission on his part that the debt is a just one, the law will not be satisfied, and give the creditor power over the goods of the debtor, until numerous and complicated operations have been gone through, and an expense amounting to double, treble, or even ten times the amount of the debt has been incurred; and all for what? Why, merely because if the law was satisfied—if reason and justice, which are the foundation of all law, saw that the claim was a just one, the lawyers would not, until they were paid for the opening of their eyes.

If, again, the debtor be not honest, there are so many traps and turnings in the law, that he can contrive to delay the necessity of payment, until, by that delay, and by the expense to which the creditor is put, the ultimate gaining of his cause may be a positive loss; and for this reason he may, out of kindness for himself, as he does in the other case out of kindness for the debtor, abandon his claim altogether; and such an abandonment cannot fail to injure the temper of the one party, and the morals of the other.

Upon a subject of so much intricacy and importance, I would, of course, be understood as expressing any thing but a positive and dogmatical opinion; but it really strikes me, that at least one of the radical causes, both of the inefficiency

and the oppressiveness of the civil law in England, is a remnant of personal slavery, the origin of which must have been in remote and barbarous times; I mean the attachment of the person of the debtor *in limine*, when the point at issue is the mere matter of an unpaid pecuniary debt. This brings into the market—into the common money-market of England, a commodity of which the better laws of the country not only prohibit the sale and purchase there, but annul every such purchase the moment that the subject of it sets a foot upon English soil. England boasts, and as far as the boast goes, it is a proud one, that the moment a slave stands upon her land and breathes her atmosphere, he becomes a free man, —that at that wholesome touch, and that salutary inspiration, the fetters drop off, and the enchained and degraded captive of avarice and injustice instantly becomes a man. But it is somewhat inconsistent, that, in the very teeth of this boast, every Englishman who is indebted in a sum exceeding (I believe) ten pounds, and who is unable to pay it at the moment it may be demanded by his creditor, may instantly be made, not indeed a labouring slave to that creditor, by the proceeds of which he might soon liquidate the debt; but a close captive, deprived not only of that liberty— that personal liberty, of which England boasts so

much, but rendered in the mean time incapable of making any efforts for discharging the demand that is upon him, and besides so degraded (for it requires something more than being simply a debtor, to taste of the demoralization of imprisonment) both in his own estimation, and in the estimation of all who previously knew him, that his chances of being afterwards able to make payment, even although that payment were not increased by the expenses of this procedure, are very much diminished.

It may be conceived that, in a country like England, whose prosperity depends so much upon its commerce, and whose commerce requires, or at least enjoys, so much credit, every reasonable means should be afforded by law for the preservation of good faith on the part of the persons who are thus allowed either to enjoy or to profit by the advances which are made to them by others; but besides the degradation and misery which it involves, and the door which it opens to ultimate evasion and fraud, there is something so palpably absurd and inconsistent in this matter of personal security, that one cannot help wondering why, amid the overwhelming mass of modern English (here *Babylonian* is the genuine term) legislating, no one has so much as hinted at its abolition. The foundation of all law should be equity; and therefore,

before it be the universal practice that the first thing upon which the law is to seize as an equivalent for a sum of money is the person of the debtor, it should be defined in law, how many pounds or shillings or pence an Englishman of every rank in society is worth. The person of a peer, or a member of the lower House of Parliament, cannot, I believe, be thus bought and sold, (they are the law makers,) and I have heard that, either now or lately, a like indulgence was in some cases extended to the clergy, (they are under grace;) but as every other man may be thus bartered away for money, or at least have his liberty, his character, and his good opinion of himself, which are far the better parts of him, thus bartered away for money, it would be but justice, that a tariff should be made, setting forth the value of a squire, a yeoman, a citizen, a burgess, and all the other denominations of society, in all their varieties of talents and character. This is the case with all other securities: before a creditor takes a mortgage, on an estate or an income, as surety for the lending of money or the furnishing of goods, he takes especial care to ascertain the value of the estate, and the certainty and duration of the income; and before a money-dealer discounts a bill of exchange, he takes especial care that the document itself is not faulty, and that there are, at least

among some of the parties previously concerned in it, funds adequate to the retiring of it when it becomes due; and therefore, before a creditor takes the power of imprisoning his debtor, as the only security for payment, he ought, not merely by parity of reasoning, but for a much stronger reason—the perishable and changeable nature of the commodity, have it demonstrated to him in black and white, that the personal liberty of the debtor, if sold at open market, would fetch the sum for which he receives it as security.

If it be said, that to set a money price upon the personal liberty of all or any of the varied inhabitants of England, is not only absolutely impossible in practice, but utterly absurd in principle,—that personal liberty and money, or other tangible property, are not quantities of the same kind—and that to attempt comparing them, and estimating the one in terms of the other, would be every bit as foolish as to ask how many miles of a road were equal in length to a summer's day, or how many pounds weight were the exact measure of an acre of land,—then I answer, that in this very absurdity is contained an argument against the practice, to which there neither is nor can be any reply. Property and liberty are incommensurable quantities: no depth of arithmetic can tell how much of the one of them is equal to any given portion of the

other; and therefore unless they be, as all other commodities are, referred to some common standard, it is difficult to conceive any thing more nonsensical, and it has worse properties than being merely nonsensical, than attempting to make the one an equivalent for the other.

But so barbarous have been the times in which this practice had its origin, that the law of England does not so much as recognise a pecuniary debt as the ground of an action; not even, I believe, though that debt be due, and on a regular document, which has paid both the fee to the lawyer and the stamp-duty to the public. The creditor cannot come into Court, unless he come with a lie in his mouth. If, indeed, he makes affidavit of the debt, and swears to it, whether falsely or not, (for the law of England has great respect for swearing,) the Court must hear him, and the writ will issue as a matter of course. But how does the writ run? does it embody the facts sworn to in the applicant's affidavit, and call upon the debtor to make payment within a reasonable time, otherwise the judgment of the law will go forth against him, and by its power his goods will be seized, and given over to the creditor? No such thing: the writ sets forth that the man whose offence (and it may probably be not so much his offence as his folly, acted upon by the importunity of the person who now

sues out the writ, when he was eager to make profit by the bargain, and in that eagerness overlooked the probability—perhaps the strong probability—of ultimate loss,) is merely negative—a failure to implement a civil contract, is guilty of a direct trespass—a violent breach, not of the civil but of the criminal law,—that, combining together with John Doe and Richard Roe, or one or other of them, (persons whose existence is just as much a matter of fact as this solemn declaration issued from, and countersigned by, a high and honourable legal authority,) and a whole host of auxiliaries armed with spears and pikes, and the Lord knows how many weapons of war and destruction, he came upon a poor man's grounds, destroying his property and threatening his life. Having begun with this precious statement, it goes on to declare that the debtor, always accompanied by Doe and Roe, or either of them, is running up and down throughout a whole shrievedom, in order to hide himself from that justice, which the daring audacity of himself, his associates, and their gang, has so monstrously outraged; and having thus stated, it charges and commands that the keepers of the public peace shall bring—not payment of the debt, or even attach the debtor's goods to prevent them from being embezzled, squandered, or secreted—

but the debtor himself, in order that he may answer for the crimes charged in the preamble.

It is difficult to conceive a system of more theoretical hardship, or, as one would think, more theoretically opposed to wisdom, than this one. In practice, however, it is said to do well, though here again there is no avoiding an appeal to the grave-digger,—"Well, for them that do ill,"—for those who will play as long as they can at hide-and-seek in the corners and doublings of the law, and who, when they can do no better—that is, when they cannot disburse another fee—will take up their abode in the King's Bench Prison, or the Fleet, or the rules and the liberties thereof, snap their fingers at their creditors in the mean time, and ultimately shake off the whole load of their incumbrances at the Insolvent Court.

That "law is a bottomless pit," was said long ago; and really the saying might be doubled, for it is not more ruinous to the fortunes than to the characters of men; and when misfortune or accident brings a man within its power, it is a matter of election with him whether it shall ruin his fortunes or break down the tone of his moral feeling. The number upon which it has the former effect is very great; and if any one imagines that those upon which it has had the latter are few, let him visit the King's Bench and the other prisons, and

also note the conduct of the majority of those who through these gates have escaped to freedom from their creditors.

Considering, that in every case of honest inability to pay, the debtor is either an object of protection, in consequence of misfortune that must have occurred to him between the time of contracting the debt and the time of payment; or the creditor is a sharer in the blame, inasmuch as he either granted the credit without making due inquiry, or derived such a profit from the granting of it as ought to be considered a premium of insurance: considering these things, it is right that there should be some protecting power in the law—something that shall not allow an honest man to be doomed to everlasting starvation, or everlasting imprisonment, for a mere involuntary breach of civil contract,—a breach too which may, in other respects, fall more heavily upon him than the loss of that which he is unable to pay falls upon the other party. This, however, is a matter of extreme delicacy and difficulty, and it would ill become me even to hint at what should be the mode of going about it. The whole legislative wisdom of England has been at work upon it for ages; they cobble it every other Session of Parliament; but, in so far as I am a judge of such a matter, their piecings and patch-

ings are like "putting new cloth upon an old garment,"—they "make the rent worse."

It cannot well, indeed, be otherwise; because a system of law which is founded upon, not a simple injustice, but a moral absurdity, cannot be a very secure one: and the fact, that the whole of this branch of the law of England proceeds upon a principle of positive slavery—a presumption that the first thing the creditor is to seize and pay himself out of, is the person and liberty of his debtor—is the root of the whole evil. One who would speak (and I am far from speaking) upon this subject, would say, "Attack his goods—get hold of them, by legal means indeed, (and that would be in the details of the law and its administration,) but summarily, and before the fear of a gaol and the dreaded loss of character and employment shall drive the man to do any thing fraudulent." It might be said that this would be a restraint upon business,—that the security over men's liberty—and especially over the liberty of Englishmen, who have so much of it, and are so fond of it—adds wonderfully to the whole value of the general mass of securities that uphold credit, and enable trade to be carried on; but if they who give credit were made perfectly aware that they could look to nothing but property for the re-payment of their pro-

perty, and that no Englishman could be deprived of his liberty, unless in the case of fraud or crime of some sort, then, though the extent of credit might be in some instances diminished, yet its stability, and therefore its usefulness, would be very much promoted, and a great deal both of misery and of positive vice would thereby be prevented. It may seem somewhat singular to those who have not reflected upon the subject, but it is a fact, and a fact which is demonstrated fully as much by the laws of England as by any other code with which I am acquainted, that the thing most difficult to be guarded against in the framing of a law, is the preventing of it from making, by its own operation, the very offenders whom it is its object to punish. That the criminal law of England has, in many instances, this effect, has been shown again and again both in the House of Commons and elsewhere; that the Court of Chancery has had this effect—more, perchance, on account of the creeping slowness of its motions than of any thing else—has also been felt as well as demonstrated; and there can be just as little doubt that such is the tendency of at least some parts of common civil law; and among these, not the least in the department to which I am alluding, because that, amid the facilities and the fluctuations of a commercial country, is the one which comes the most frequently into play.

The practices of the Babylonian courts of civil justice and equity,—the modesty by which students eat their way to a permission to plead the causes and pocket the money of the lieges—the arts by which silk gowns are attained—and the wisdom by which talent or tact ultimately climbs its way to the bench,—are matters which would be very long, and withal very uninteresting, in the recital; and therefore I shall close this chapter of "the deeds of the law," by saying one word respecting the mode in which criminal offenders are found out, and two words on that in which they are punished by the Babylonian tribunals.

The practice of the Babylonian police, the characters which it brings to light and to trial, and the scenes which it discloses, are so regularly and so fully set forth in the daily newspapers, that there remains little which any one can add, even on particular subjects, and nothing to which any thing like a general character could be given. It may be, that the Babylonian police is not so completely organized, or so systematic in its movements, as those polices which, in addition to the detection of private offenders, are spies for a despotic government, or who, perhaps, are political in their principles, intention, and character, and look out for private offenders only in supplement and at their leisure; but when it is considered

that this establishment has all its efforts seconded by the vigilance and publicity of the press, then it must be allowed, that, in as far as the prevention and punishment of private offences are concerned, the police of London is abundantly watchful. Some object to the latitude of discretionary power with which those magistrates are invested: but I could never discover any harm in the latitude of discretionary power, provided that it could be always accompanied by a corresponding longitude of discretion in the magistrate himself; and in this respect, it must be admitted that, though the duty in London be out of all calculation more severe and difficult than that in any other part of the country, the magistrates, seconded as aforesaid, manage it in a superior manner. There are many circumstances, and circumstances, too, of the greatest importance, in the cases which come before a police magistrate, that no statutory provision could include; and certainly the other parts of the system bear one out in saying, that there is no necessary and inseparable connexion between inordinate legislation and practical perfection. It may be said, that it is a hardship for the accused that a single magistrate, upon his own interpretation of the statute, may or may not commit them to trial, and hold them to bail or in prison till the sessions of gaol delivery come round; that many persons so

held to bail, or so imprisoned, have the bills against them ignored by the Grand Jury, or are acquitted upon trial; and thus, though innocent in law, and it may be also in fact, they return into society, not only as persons who have received a stain in their characters which it is impossible immediately or altogether to wipe off, but as having sustained a positive injury. That this is a hardship, no one can deny; but it is far easier to expose the hardship, than to discover how it could be prevented. If a discretionary power in such matters be not safe in the hands of the police magistrate, in what other hands could it be confided? That constructive evidence should ever be resorted to upon an actual trial, and that character should have any effect there, otherwise than well-established good character procuring mitigation of punishment, is not on any account to be desired; but still, if a person be well known to the police as one who is in the habit of committing the offence complained of, and has been found in such circumstances as make it, to the common sense of an unprejudiced person, a matter of probability that he is the offender, then both justice and equity require that he should not instantly be allowed to escape. The number of cases in which crimes have been brought home in consequence of evidence discovered after the first appre-

hending of the offender are so many, and have cleared society of such a number of those who endangered its security, that they fully establish, not merely the propriety, but the necessity, of this discretionary power on the part of the magistrate.

There is, however, one evil in the management of Babylonian criminal justice, for which it would be very desirable, and might be possible, to find a remedy; and that is, making the party who has suffered by the crime the prosecutor in the punishment of it. Independently of the expense which the civil departments of the law costs individuals, in fees and in taxes, and of the expense of the criminal department in those salaries and allowances which are paid out of the general and local taxes, it is somewhat hard, that if a man shall get his property stolen, his house broken into, or his life nearly taken away, he should be the instrument, and, in the first instance, the paymaster, in bringing the offender to justice. Perhaps this may be intended to give a fictitious appearance of purity to the law—to set it off as something which pries not even into the wrongs of society, but which, like emblematical justice, is hoodwinked or blind, and can know and recognize nothing but that which it hears in the shape of evidence before a regular Court. But, how much soever this may

tend to give to the law a colour of fictitious independence, there can be no doubt that it impairs both its efficiency and its grandeur. When a crime has been committed, though the immediate suffering or loss may be to the individual, the injury set forth in the major proposition is an injury done to society; and therefore the vengeance belongs to the public, and should be demanded in the name of the public, through whatever officer the demand might come.

The circumstance of private prosecutors standing up and demanding exile or death against their fellow-subjects, for what their presence there gives an impression can be nothing more than private offences; their pleading when the trial is over for repayment of the expense to which they are put; the hurried and apparently heedless mode of conducting this most solemn of all business; the cold-blooded indifference of the Old Bailey pleaders; and the whole appearance, keeping, and conduct, of that foremost of Babylonian receiving-houses for the hulks and for the gallows,—make the Old Bailey Sessions one of the most painful scenes that a feeling mind can contemplate: and setting aside altogether the monstrous discrepancy that there is between many of the crimes and the punishments, the consequent necessity that there is upon the part of the Crown to extend its prerogative of

mercy to a great number of those whom the law dooms to die; the effect which this hope of mercy has upon the sentence itself, and the agony and consequent despair which it inflicts upon those who must ultimately undergo that punishment which humanity doubts whether man, under any circumstances, would dare to inflict,—betray a want of the fit solemn slowness and awful dignity, about the Babylonian Courts of criminal retribution, from which one cannot help turning away as from a painful and pernicious thing. The men, and sometimes also *(proh pudor!)* the women of Babylon, frequent those scenes; not to learn wisdom, but to seek amusement—to gratify that restless and rapacious curiosity, which will not be satisfied with the things and other occurrences of a very large and very full epitome of the world. Nay, they will not only attend as matter of amusement, and laugh and joke while the scales of life and of death are quivering with their final poise; they will come there in order to ascertain whether the bets which they have taken—the base gambling sums which they have staked upon the turning up of life or death for their fellow-creature, are to be won or to be lost. Without this abomination, the scene is revolting enough; but with this, there is not a brand of infamy deep enough, and deformed enough, for marking its enormity.

The severest thing that can be said is, that it is done by those who are shaken by the hand in public places and called gentlemen.

Another circumstance in the conduct of these Courts which one cannot help regretting is, that counsel are permitted to do so little for those who probably fee them with the last money they can borrow, and that the little which custom permits them to do is done in so heartless and heedless a manner. In consequence of this, and not, of course, because the men are in themselves more harsh, more heartless, more dead, not merely to every kindly, but to every consistent feeling, I have seldom heard the words " An Old Bailey counsel" mentioned, without that contraction of the features, and that shrug of the shoulders, which indicate that something repulsive has started across the mind.

At the very time when all else appears to have deserted the hapless victim of the law,—when the private prosecutor has sworn against him,—when learned counsel has stated the case,—when the witnesses for the prosecution have given their evidence—that evidence which has been known and arranging all the time that the party charged has been immured in a prison,—when the few brief cross examinations have been made,—while the prisoner stands in open view of all the spectators, with the

reflected light of a mirror disclosing every line of his face, and judge, jury, and the spectators, are all entirely engaged in trying him both by the evidence which has been sworn against him, and by that which appears in his own expression; at that moment of pain and difficulty he is called upon to make his defence—to collect his scattered thoughts and summon his tortured nerves, in order that he may be a match for cool men and cunning lawyers. All this from the world he might possibly bear, but that which cuts to the heart is yet behind; his counsel rises, pulls his gown about him, instinctively puts his hand in his pocket, and jingles the fee in the hearing of the poor wretch whose last hope was, and to that moment is, the assistance which that fee is to procure. But does the sage counsel plead? Does he make one effort to turn the scale of justice; or failing that, does he appeal to the proper sources of mercy? Does he tell the jury, in the language of that Gospel upon which they are sworn, that "with whatsoever judgment they judge, it shall be judged to them again?" Does he dwell upon the temptations to which the unfortunate person may have been exposed—the hard necessity which, in an hour of madness and despair, tempted him, when man would not "give him leave to toil," to put forth his hand, and take upwards of forty

shillings in a dwelling-house, in order to save, from that starvation which he had no other means of preventing, those whose lives were dearer to him than his own? Oh, not a jot! The man of law, whatever else he may have learned along with it, has learned to avoid the statute himself; and so, pulling his gown around him, and chinking his fee, as I have said, he delivers these words of conciliation, with any thing but the most kindly looks, "If you *have* any thing to say for yourself, now is your time to say it, for I can do no more for you;" and with that he flings himself out of that Court, to attend in another, pocket another fee, and make merry thereupon, at the very moment, perhaps, when the poor culprit is undergoing sentence of death, for want of the very assistance which the learned person could have rendered. This practice may be just, but it is not merciful; and surely, while the laws of England continue to be so very bloody as they are at present, those who are tried under them ought to have the ablest counsel at the public expense. It is, however, extremely difficult to keep either the enactments or the practices of the law up to the state of society, without more wisdom and more care than all the wise men of Babylon the Great are able to bestow; and therefore it may be truly said, that "by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh *living* be justified,"

unless, indeed, we use the term in the sense in which it is used by Lindsay of Pitscottie, the Scottish historian,—namely, that the right or the wrong of the matter shall terminate in front of Newgate.

CHAPTER XI.

BABYLONIAN EDUCATION.

"Bred up where discipline most rare is."

ALTHOUGH London is unquestionably the place where there is the greatest demand, and beyond all calculation or comparison the most ample and the most equitable reward, for every description, both of manual and of mental power,—though it be, above all places—and so far above them as well nigh to leave similarity altogether out of the question—favourable for giving that scope, that publicity, and that renown, without which talents can hardly reach the highest degree of excellence,—and although, of latter years in an especial manner, all those petty controls — that dependence upon factions, and systems, and societies, and individuals—that dependence upon mere names, and

that subservience of intellectual power to conventional rank,—have been done away with, and the more high and honourable distinction of esteeming and rewarding every man according to his real merits has come in their place; yet it must be admitted, that London in itself, and in its domesticated and permanent society, neither is nor can be the nursery of those powers, and more especially those intellectual powers, which it is so able, so willing, and finds it so much to be its own interest, thus pre-eminently to encourage. That which London demands is action: the bustle, the hurry, and the necessities of its society will not admit of that long, laborious, industrious, and retired preparation, which is the foundation of that eminence which it attracts. In such a place, human life is too valuable, and human time too precious, for being occupied about any thing that cannot be turned immediately to account; and therefore the system of education which prevails in and about London scarcely comes under the denomination of what may strictly be termed moral discipline, or mental culture.

Admitting, indeed, that there were time, apart from actual business, to acquire this sort of cultivation, there is no inducement to it. There is no law of human nature more strong in itself, or more constant in its operation, than that which prompts

us to acquire every possession, and arrive at every enjoyment, by the shortest and the easiest means. That which we can conveniently purchase, we shall never take the trouble of making for ourselves; and when we can have the conclusion ready drawn, it is not to be expected that we shall go through all the fatigue of the investigation. Besides, it is only the hope of enjoying the result of labour that induces man to undertake any species of it, and more especially that which, being mental, can give him no *eclât* in the eyes of a multitude, while he is engaged in the doing of it.

In more solitary places,—where the facilities of immediate enjoyment are fewer, the incentives to immediate action less strong, and where man at every period of life, and more especially in the earlier parts of it when the mind is most active and most susceptible of permanent impressions,—the individual is in a great measure left to his own resources; and his enjoyments are regulated by his skill and his industry in finding them out, and, in many instances, actually creating them for himself. In London, on the other hand, every thing is ready made; and all that either man or boy requires is, that he shall possess such a supply of money as shall furnish him with these numerous inviting and easily acquired gratifications. Thus there is a two-fold chain constantly drawing the

Babylonian youth from the practice of any thing like laborious or profound study. He sees as much of interest and of novelty as, without any labour on his part, answers quite well for satisfying ordinary curiosity; and the purchasable gratifications of appetite lie so temptingly around, that the first and strongest of his desires is to become possessed of that which shall enable him to purchase them. His parents have been brought up amid the same circumstances, and therefore their modes of thinking and of acting are precisely the same. If they have been successful in business, or have by any other means acquired affluence, then enjoyment is the order of the day; and though they be careful enough to impress upon the youth the necessity of also acquiring affluence for himself, yet as by far the greater majority of them have acquired their own affluence without any thing deserving the name of education, even they look upon the gratification of the animal passions of their children as being a matter of far greater importance than the cultivation of their minds. They know what it is to make a successful speculation, to eat a luxurious dinner, to dress splendidly, and to attend a place of public resort or amusement; but they have no conception whatever that there is any such thing as pleasure in sitting down to mope over those profound disquisitions, without which, however ele-

gant may be the external manners, and however luxurious the modes of life, the mind itself can be little better than an uncultivated waste.

To those who know much about the matter, it will, I presume, be decisive on the point as to the inferiority of Babylonian education, in as far as regards the more deep and general cultivation of the mental powers, that it is, by parent, by pupil, and by teacher, looked upon as nothing else than a piece of the common mechanism of trade. The parent—I mean the Babylonian parent—when he purposes to educate his child, does it merely with a view of fitting that child for the business or enjoyment of the world, in some particular and limited department; the teacher, again, has no view beyond how he shall, for the smallest possible outlay both of money and of trouble, receive the greatest return; while the child, amid the external temptations and luxuries which every where surround him, and not seeing that much profound thought is exercised by any body that he knows, naturally takes matters as easily as ever he can.

I do not mean to say that the Babylonians are an uneducated people; all that I contend for is, that their education is of a kind which is peculiar to themselves, or only approximated in other places in proportion as those approach in size to the Babylon. The place itself is artificial; and it is

impossible that the education should be any thing else, even supposing that they by whom it is conducted (and that is far from being the case) were themselves the most learned persons, and the most enthusiastic in their devotedness to learning, that the country any where could afford. Farther than this, the Babylonian education, whether it apply to the one sex or to the other, is superficial: I grant that in its surface it looks well—it is smooth, showy, and marketable; but it has little or no depth whatever. In as far as the female part of it is concerned, it does not appear that—unless in some instances, which are so very few as to make exceptions against the rule rather than arguments in favour of it—education is any where a matter of science; and therefore it would be too much to expect that it should be a matter of science in the Babylon. But there the education of the two sexes is much more nearly upon an equality, than in any other place with which I am acquainted: both learn to read and write, and, among those classes that look toward the shop, both learn to cast accounts; both get a smattering of the modern languages; and if Master be sent for a few years to smooth the dog's-ears in the Latin grammar, Miss spends somewhat more time, with equal mental improvement, in cudgelling the piano-forte or frightening the harp.

In Geography, Miss usually has the advantage: for all that either of them learns there is only a few names by rote, a whirl or two given to the globe, the scratching upon a sheet of paper of a few crooked lines which are said to form a map; and as in this latter vocation Miss, if her governess shall not be too modern for that, has a chance of stitching her map upon cloth, as well as scratching it upon paper, she has fairly the advantage of Master. In the other arts, for it is as arts only that they are all attended to, there is very little good done. To be sure, boys, and sometimes girls, draw lines, and squares, and circles, upon paper, and call it Geometry; mix up *a*s, and *b*s, and *x*s, and *y*s, and z*s*, with +s, and −s, and call the *melange* Algebra; or frequent the theatres during the Easter holidays, to gaze upon a piece of painted canvass, with a few holes in it and a lanthorn behind, and call it Astronomy. On neither of those subjects, nor on any subject of an analogous nature, does their knowledge or their care reach beyond the external wonders. As, however, the abstract part of science does not directly minister much to the ordinary business of life, and as the occurrences of the day furnish abundant materials for conversation for the Babylonians, the unscientific nature of their education is never felt by them-

selves, and would not be perceived by a stranger accustomed to a different order of things, were he not to examine the matter a little closely.

The great aim of the one sex in the Babylon seems to be, that they shall be successful in business; and the great aim of the other sex, that they shall be agreeable in their manners and fascinating in their persons,—matters which, though they do not conduce to that strength and severity of character which obtain among persons whose aim is different, and whose education is different in consequence, render the Babylonians both a safe and a pleasant people.

Envious strangers have said that the males of England are never either children or men; but that the moment that they can walk or speak they have the smartness and the activity of youths, and that they never afterwards ripen to the full vigour of masculine intellect. The former part of the saying is certainly true of them of the Babylon; for among boys at a very early age there is a frankness, a quickness, and perhaps also a manliness, which are not to be found or even expected where society is very limited, and where children are kept out of that society, limited as it is. In remote places, one of the most difficult, as well as most delicate parts of education, is acquiring a knowledge of the world; but in a place like London, that know-

ledge is so easy, so absolutely unavoidable, that it has all the appearance of being intuitive; and, in consequence of this, there is no such thing as a change from the gawky boy, who knows only books, to the wary man, who, as he began the study of the world late, does not feel altogether at home in it.

But in proportion as the facilities of knowing the world, and the temptations to know it, are greater in the Babylon than in other places, the value of the plan of education, properly so called, is decidedly inferior. Those who have attended most carefully to the influence of education upon the manners and the mind jointly, have laid it down, as an invariable result of their experience, that the most wholesome and effective system, for general purposes, is that which combines residence under the paternal roof with the emulation of a public school, where literature and science are regularly, severely, and rigidly taught. There are certain parts of moral culture, to which none but a parent can be supposed to attend; and there are certain points of intellectual culture, to which no child will attend without that most efficient of all stimuli—the fear of being surpassed by other children. However well the master or the mistress of a boarding-school may be qualified for attending to the moral conduct and moral culture of young people,

and however much they may be disposed, the numbers in a large establishment (and in a place like London, if those at the head of it be eminent, the establishment will be large) prevent that close attention to each individual, which a perfect training of the mind would require; and (practically speaking) at very large establishments, those who have the chief superintendence do not and cannot attend to individual differences of disposition at all, but leave any thing which is done approaching to this, to persons of an inferior order; and thus, as much mischief is often done by the intellectual spoiling of the tutor or governess, as more than counteracts all the good that results from their mechanical labours.

A system of education which would combine the moral watchfulness of home with the advantage of a public school is not, however, practicable in London. Even though the inhabitants of every district were to establish a school, the younger children, especially in the closest parts of the city, could not go to it; and there are so many temptations to loiter, and even to do worse things, by the way, that it would not be safe to send the older ones. Thus there seems to be no alternative for the great body of the Babylonians, but to trust the education of their children wholly to that set of trades-people who speculate in what are called "Academies for

Young Gentlemen," and "Establishments for Young Ladies."

That there are, among the immense number of persons who pursue this track in the hope of making their fortunes and leaving it off as soon as ever they can, persons of considerable talents, and persons who are well-disposed toward their pupils, I do not mean to deny: but still, I very strongly suspect that the number of these bears but a small proportion to the whole; and were they even twice as numerous as they are, that would not make a good system out of a bad one. There is nothing in which people, whatever may be their own education, are so apt to be imposed upon, as the education of their children; and there is no form of that in which imposition is so easily carried on, as when the child lives apart from its parents, and visits them only at the holidays. The school must be a bad one indeed, if some improvement have not been made in the course of the half or quarter of a year which takes place between two of those terms of paternal joy and juvenile gratification; and as the natural feeling of the parent does not pause and take the time in which this difference has been made fully into the account, the real improvement, even in the matters which are brought forward for judgment, and of which the parent is capable of judging, is sure to be very much magnified. But

the matters which answer best for pleasing a parent, and being shown off to a parent's friends at the holidays, although they be those which conduce most to the teacher's honour and emolument, and are therefore those which must receive the greatest share of attention at the school, are not, for either of these reasons, the best for the child itself. The most valuable part of education is that which teaches the child to know; but the one which make the best matter for exhibition is that which teaches it to do—no, not "teaches *it* to do" either, but that which *does*, always with the assistance of the teacher, and it may be sometimes without the assistance of the child. In this way, it very often happens that the child of either sex, who returns from the school with a long bill to enlarge the eyes of mamma and the mouth of papa, and a portfolio and box full of pretty nothings to set them right again, and induce them to send for aunt and uncle, and all the rest, to wonder at the display of youthful skill, and taste, and industry, has not acquired above half a dozen of new ideas all the time, and that it has acquired these from its school-fellows, or from the chamber-maid or the footman.

The resident Babylonians complain that they are eaten up—literally consumed from the place—by the provincials; and that Yorkshiremen and

Irishmen, and especially Scotchmen, invade every house and every establishment like locusts, and stick and magnify like leeches; but really—independently of the waste of human life from the want of care and comfort in the poorer classes, from haply the excess of comfort in the more wealthy, and from the effect of close situation and contaminated air upon all—from the great distraction and waste of intellect which goes on in such a place, and the miserable system of general education—which I confess I do not see any means of remedying—if there were not a constant importation into London, it would soon become as remarkable for the want of talent as it is at present for the possession.

It by no means follows that there is in the Babylon any thing which destroys the natural powers, or that children are born there with feebler minds, or even feebler bodies, than in other places. There is no need for such supposition, nor, though there were, would it be of any use, seeing that it is not true; and the constant temptations to enjoyment, the great facilties there are for it, the early period at which young men get immured in business, the closeness with which they attend to it, the light and transient nature of all subjects of conversation, and the tendency which the continual application of the many and powerful stimuli of so great

a city has to deaden and exhaust the more active powers, and reduce men to a nearer resemblance to machines, are quite enough to account for the whole matter. Superficial as the system of education is, it suffices for all the purposes of society; and though, out of the line of his particular vocation, the opinion of a Babylonian be neither the wisest nor the most enlightened opinion in the world, there does not appear to be any very obvious way of improving it.

If the education of the middle classes be thus superficial, it cannot be supposed that that of the lower can be better: indeed, where that is at all made a matter of public interest, the very generosity of John Bull, or rather the notion which he has of generosity, spoils its effect. John, especially in Babylon, reduces all things to a money value; and so much money expended upon any thing, is always, in his view of the matter, so much good done. Perhaps it may be the only way of accomplishing the education of the poor; but I am disposed to think that the number of charitable institutions at which children get education gratis, disposes their parents to set a lower value upon it than if they had to purchase it out of their own earnings. In order to give education its proper effect, I should suppose (though I will not be dogmatical upon the subject) that both the parent

and the child should have a feeling that it is their own, and that by its means, and without favour, obligation, or assistance, they ought to rise in the world. It may be, that, in a place like the Babylon, where a man who would be absolutely great in any other place is absolutely little, and where, of course, one who would be but little any where, is nothing at all—where the poor have no distinction to gain, and, except honesty and sobriety, no character to lose,—they would not, of their own accord, educate their children: but even that does not prevent me from thinking that forced education, like forced fruit, wants much of the flavour of that which is natural; and I rather am inclined to think, that, though the children at these schools make a very pretty show upon parade days, and though the system gives occasion for meetings, and speeches, and dinners,—yet that it is neither the best, nor—what the Babylonians will understand better—the cheapest, mode of educating the poor.

In these remarks, I have altogether omitted the foundation and company schools of a higher class; not because I think that they are faultless, but because their faults are of another description. They are *exclusive* establishments—accessible for other reasons than the merits of the parties, or even their ability to pay the fees; and though liberty requires that those who found any sort of

establishment should be allowed to arrange the details of it, yet knowledge—and education, if it be meant to communicate knowledge—should know, and especially feel, no aristocracy but its own.

It is a curious, singular, and perhaps a mischievous fact, that, in the city which lays claim to more liberty, more respect for man in himself, and less for the merely accidental distinctions of life, than any other in the kingdom, and which contains more establishments for education of one kind or another than any other place, should not have a single public school which is open upon the same terms to all classes of persons; but should be under the necessity of teaching pride to one class of society, and shame and degradation to another, the very moment that they begin to study the Horn-book.

There have recently been some proposals for the founding of a Babylonian University upon a liberal plan, both in respect to the extent of the endowments, and the numbers, and terms of admitting the pupils; but they from whom such a proposal came could not have studied very carefully the structure of Babylonian society. A school of arts might do; but a University is so contrary to all the existing practices of the Babylon, that it is not much less absurd than if one were to purpose forming the

Jews of Capel Court into an agricultural society, or forming the Court of Aldermen into a company of sharp-shooters in the event of another war. Every institution in the Babylon must have either business or pleasure for its object, otherwise it will not be supported. If it had been the proper locality for a University, it would have had one ere now, —and now it has lectures, reported to be delivered twice a day by the Gresham Professors at the Royal Exchange; but who ever heard of any body attending them, except a curious stranger, bent upon being every where?

But if the system of juvenile education in the Babylon be constitutionally and, to all appearance, incurably bad, except in so far as conduces to business and amusement, the course which opens itself most easily and most widely for youth, is not calculated very much to improve matters. The desk, the counter, or the Court of Law, from early morn till dusk; the coffee-house, the club, or the theatre, till twelve; the tavern, for an hour or two; sleep; and the same routine day after day,—can create little taste, and leave little time for mutual cultivation: nor, if we look a little higher, as it is called, in society, and substitute the toilette, the lounge, and the gaming-house, we shall not make an exchange very much for the better. Whatever

view of the matter, indeed, we take, we are always brought back to the position from which we started, —namely, that, however favourable London may be for the exercise or the reward of talents, it is not favourable for their production.

CHAPTER XII.

CONCLUSION OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

"The adventure of the bear and fiddle
Is sung, but breaks off in the middle."

It is not the best of all possible consolations for a writer to feel, when bringing up the rear of his second volume, that the unnoticed part of his subject would afford abundant materials for many volumes more: and though this feeling forces itself upon me whether I will or not, the confessing of it may not be the most prudent of all confessions; but as, in the course of these two volumes, I have so frequently had occasion to make statements respecting other matters which an inordinate quantity of prudence would be very much disposed to question, it is not more than justice that I should make the same sort of statement with regard to myself. There is no such thing, I find, as a possibility of bringing Babylon the Great within the compass of

two post octavo volumes,—at least I have tried to squeeze the several component parts of it with which I have grappled into as small a space as possible, and yet here I am, at the very end of the space that I proposed to myself, with I know not how much of the subject remaining without so much as ever having been noticed. Beyond the limit of the two volumes, however, I do not now mean to go. "A great book," as Solomon says, "is a great evil:" it does not need Solomon to find out that a great city, whatever redeeming qualities it may have, is somewhat more than one great evil; and hence it would be improper, without a previous consultation with Messieurs the public, to inflict upon them that evil, which on my part would be voluntary, as a palliative to the other evils for which I am in no way accountable. If the book be a bad one, there is too much of it already; and if it be good, the public will no doubt retain both the faculty and the desire of reading as long as shall enable me to furnish the remainder. This grave question I cannot settle; for to remit a book to the judgment of him by whom it is written, would be about as wise as to submit the quantity of a lady's personal attractions to her own arbitration.

When, indeed, I look at the subjects to which I have adverted, and think of those to which I have been unable to allude, it gives me a greater idea

of the extent and variety of the mighty Babylon than I could have received in any other way, or than I could in any way whatever translate into words. I shall not therefore attempt it; but just rather enumerate the mere titles of one or two of these subjects—or parts of the one great subject—which I have been obliged to omit, or merely hint at.

In the first place, there is that almost unthreadable labyrinth, the Babylonian law, which, though like that of the Medes and Persians, it be not unalterable, yet appears to be seldom altered for the better. When I speak of law, I do not of course mean that interminable muster of statutes, many of which clash with each other and with common sense; that incomprehensible bundle of usages, and that *ollapodrida* of precedents, which, lumped and lumbered together, are venerated as the laws of England,—the only divinity which has a *Temple* of Eastern magnificence within the precincts of the mighty Babylon. Those statutes, those usages, and those precedents, are so many, and they are worked this way and that way with so much chicanery, and form such a precious "piece of arras-work," that "none but themselves can be their parallel," and not even themselves can be their own index or expositor. A full-length portrait of a single suit in Chancery would be sufficient to frighten the whole subscribers to a circulating library; and not

only is this, but it would be more than enough to cure the veriest litigants in the world of their fondness for law, and tempt patriotic men away from their affection for those parchment idols, and make them hold dalliance with those bugbears of a wig-adoring population,—kings and queens—however useless or however arbitrary.

To show that I am right in this forbearance,—that I do it in mercy to my readers, it may not be amiss to quote a few items from a bill of expenses in Chancery, upon a question so simple, as that whether certain sums which the lords of a certain manor devised nearly two hundred years ago to the overseers and church-wardens of a certain parish, for charitable purposes, could be by them administered and applied according to the will of the donor or not. Upon other branches of the law, time, in one way or other, is allowed to close his wing; but it seems that the Court of Chancery knows no prescription, and is trammelled by no statute of limitations, but grapples with eternity itself; and becomes to all, save the lawyers and officers belonging to the said Court, an eternity of punishment—a Tophet in which there is an everlasting consuming, but from which there is no deliverance. The specimen which I shall give, and it is by no means the worst that I could give, is as follows:—

1824.

Dec. 6.	Attending Court, three petitions in the paper for judgment, when the Lord Chancellor went partially into the matter, and requested to be furnished with the repealed Local Act, which he said he would read, and give his judgment to-morrow	2	0	0
7.	Attending the Court all day, three petitions in the paper, when his Lordship said he had to leave early, but would not fail giving his judgment to-morrow morning	2	0	0
8.	Attending Court all day, three petitions in the paper for judgment, when the Lord Chancellor adverted to the question of jurisdiction, which he desired to be again spoken to, and requested that the Dean and Chapter of Canterbury, they being the Lords of the Manor of Walworth, should attend him, and appointed Saturday next for that purpose; and requested to be informed as to the mode of appointing overseers at the time the Charity was founded	2	0	0
11.	Attending Court all day, three petitions, when the same were called on, and Mr. Shadwell applied, on the part of the Dean and Chapter of Canterbury, to let the petitions stand over, and the same were ordered till the first seal			

	before Hilary Term, to give the Dean and Chapter an opportunity of considering what course they should take	2	0	0
1825.				
Jan. 11.	Attending Court on three petitions, when Mr. Shadwell, on the part of the Dean and Chapter, stated, that he was not prepared to go on; and the Lord Chancellor ordered the same to stand for this day fortnight peremptory	2	0	0
25.	Attending Court all day, three petitions on the paper, but same not called on	1	10	0
26.	The like attendance this day . . .	1	10	0
27.	The like attendance this day . . .	1	10	0
28.	The like attendance this day . . .	1	10	0
29.	Attending Court, three petitions in the paper; the same called on, and ordered to stand for Tuesday next, for the Dean and Chapter to prove themselves entitled to interfere in this matter as visitors	2	0	0
Feb. 1.	Attending Court all day; three petitions in the paper, but same not called on .	1	10	0
4.	Attending Court all day, three petitions in the paper, but same not called on .	1	10	0
5.	The like attendance in Court this day; three petitions in the paper	1	10	0
9.	The like attendance this day	1	10	0
10.	The like attendance this day	1	10	0
11.	The like attendance this day	1	10	0

Feb. 23.	Attending Court, when the Lord Chancellor directed the Registrar to put the petitions in the paper for Tuesday next	0	6	8
Mar. 1.	Attending Court on three petitions; same in the paper, and called on, when the various points suggested by the Court were again argued at some length, and his Lordship promised to give his judgment this day week . .	2	0	0
8.	Attending Court; but the Lord Chancellor did not give judgment according to his promise	0	6	8

And so on, on!

From this single brick of the Babel of Chancery—or rather from this little fragment of a brick of that Babel—for no man can guess at the beginning of the suit, or in any way predict the end,—some judgment may be formed of the utter impossibility of mind to comprehend, or words to describe, that wonderful structure: nor can such a course of things be avoided, so long as it is binding upon the Lord Chancellor to decide according to equity, and yet not contrary to law, where there are so many conflicting interests and contradictory statutes. All, with the exception of those who make a profit by it, complain of this Court of Chancery, not as a great grievance merely, but as a nuisance which is intolerable, and which no country but England could be able to endure.

A second good subject for Babylonian discussion is that sort of underlaw—a species of statutory, equitable, and other mode of procedure, which is carried on by their Worships the Aldermen and their Honours the Magistrates, and in which they are partly guided by the wisdom of Parliamentary enactment, and partly by that more fond, though occasionally more frail wisdom, which is their own property. This is, in its nature, the very reverse of Chancery; for if that cumbrous machine, for the purpose of obtaining results that are absolutely free from flaw, keep working at them till truth itself be worse for the parties than any error—the Magisterial decisions are done with so much promptitude, that, especially in the case of men who have other business to attend to, and are not any way remarkable either for the capacity or the furnishing of their heads, very great blunders are committed, both in the subjecting of innocent persons to punishment, and the returning of rogues back again upon the world, hardened if not brightened in their character. It must be admitted, indeed, that where a number of persons sufficient to people a pretty sizeable state are huddled together within the compass of a few miles,—where there is so much fixed property, so much property floating about, so many persons who have no check upon them but fear of absolute punishment, and so many ap-

parent facilities for escaping that,—it would be extremely difficult, if not altogether impossible, to have a Police establishment which could at all times, in all cases, and under all circumstances, hold the balance even in the midst of so many perplexities, and yet be so rapid in its movements, as not to impede the general progress or interrupt the general pursuits of society. Allowing for all its imperfections, the Babylonian Police is a curious engine; and, with the Press to second its efforts, it is one of great value,—of so great value, indeed, that I am perhaps within the truth when I say, that the number of undetected crimes in London is not half so great, in proportion to the whole, as it is in places which contain not a score of inhabitants for every thousand that London numbers.

Another subject, the investigation of which would be both curious in itself and would throw some light upon the structure of Babylonian society and the tenor of Babylonian thought, is the various institutions, societies, clubs, and coteries, within the same, which devote, or profess to devote, a certain portion of their time to matters connected with science and literature. From the obscurity of most of those institutions, it may very naturally, and perhaps not very unjustly, be concluded, that they contribute not much to the advancement of those subjects

about which they occupy themselves; and it may thence be also inferred (which, indeed, may be proved directly in many ways) that such matters enter not much into the Babylonian theory of the profitable consumption of time. The senses are called into such frequent, such varied, such vigorous exercise, that there is little leisure, and probably less disposition, to debate with the sages or dream with the Muses; and therefore it is, that the sages and the singers stretch themselves so listlessly, and hang their harps so mournfully, by the willow-trees on her banks. Still, it would be worth while to ascertain why a Royal Society of Science does not in these times add to science even a new formala for the solution of an equation; why a Royal Society of Literature produces not one page that can be preserved in the literary storehouse; why the conservators of a Royal Museum contrive to have some of its best contents rotting in cobwebs and oblivion; and why the British public generally, who certainly contribute more for public purposes than any other people in the world, find not, when the rumour of Fame tempts them from the quietude of the provinces to visit the Babylon, a single object which they can come at and call their own, even to sight, except the interminable bricks, the restless dust, and the smoke-contaminated air.

Nor would those subjects, the intention of which

is amusement in its proper and rational form, be the worse for a little candid and careful examination. At the head of these, one is accustomed to place dramatic representation; and one cannot help observing, that almost in proportion as the Babylon has risen in wealth, in grandeur, and in enjoyment, and pretends to have risen in refinement and in taste, in the same proportion has her drama become feeble, whimsical, and vulgar. The stage never was, and probably never was intended to be, a school of morality; but if we are to judge from the better specimens of the written drama, we may suppose, without fatiguing ourselves with the antiquarianism of the matter, that it once was not merely intended, but actually successful, as a place of harmless relaxation and pleasant amusement for rational men and modest women. That such is its character in these days, not even charity itself can admit: the greatest part of society have abandoned it; and those who reel there in the intervals of their cups, have other attractions than those of the dramatic representation, while the managers find it their interest to tolerate, if not to encourage, other performers than those who take their cue from the prompter. What are called the Minor Theatres are not much better than schools of vulgarity, if not of vice; and I have heard it more than surmised, that bullies and blackguards are

procured and paid, either by the superintendents, or at any rate by the attendants, at the saloons of the national theatres. Now, it would be curious to conjecture at what might be the causes of these things; but to give any thing like probability to the conjecture would demand space as well as time.

The other fine arts would also demand attention. Painting and music, especially the former, still need the staff of patronage; and it would be worth while just to ask whether the kind and degree of patronage given, be those which afford the fairest scope and the fullest reward for talent. Nor would it be amiss to cast a glance over those arts which, though they be not in themselves entitled to the epithet "fine," are yet chiefly practised by those who consider themselves as the very finest that the Babylon affords. There are doings in the purlieus of St. James's, and in other parts at the west end of the town,—there are nobles of the land and members of the senate, who engage in practices there, which fall more heavily upon their rentals, and make them more irritable in their dispositions, and more hostile to certain improvements in the way of liberal policy, than all those agricultural distresses which form the permanent and public burden of their song of lamentation. Those matters of which the law itself can scarcely take

hold, and of which, perchance, some of its departments may be a little diary, would not be the worse, although there were wasted upon them a few drops of the gentle dew of the quill, and one word of meek expostulation—one little plea for those good old English practices which exotic vice, or, if you like it better, exotic fashion, invigorated by that air of England which should cherish better things, has banished.

Nor would it be amiss to survey the dens of Mammon,—to look into the great gaming-house in Capel Court, and to point out the thousand trap-doors which cupidity and chicanery have there opened for the surplus wealth of this country, since Mammon became lord of the ascendant, and kings and courts, and principals and people, found their price in the money-market, and were bought and sold with the same ease and the same indifference as bales of merchandize.

And even when all this had been discussed, there would still remain all the ordinary "lions" of the Great Babylon—all those things which strangers come to see, and many which they come to perform. Wherever, indeed, one turns one's view,—whether to physical or to moral subjects—whether to the workmanship of man, or to his working, the catalogue of Babylonian marvels stretches on almost to infinitude,—when one imagines that one has

studied and exhausted the subject, that subject appears as new, as fresh, and as unexhaustible, as ever; and while engaged in such a pursuit, one has no need, like the Macedonian, to sit down and weep because there is not a world to conquer: for here the perplexity is, that the world is so varied that it cannot be known, and so vast that it cannot be conquered. Truly it is Babylon; and whether its good or its ill be the object of contemplation, it is BABYLON THE GREAT.

END OF VOL. II.

LONDON:
PRINTED BY S. AND R. BENTLEY, DORSET STREET.

00044734

Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 02 January, 2016